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ABSTRACT

Approximately 25 million adults are currently reading below the fifth-grade level, and another 35 to 40 million adults read between the fifth- and eighth-grade levels. This is particularly significant for the American press inasmuch as the average daily newspaper is written at a minimum of a ninth-grade reading level. A number of unexamined statements have become firmly entrenched in media discussion of the problem of adult illiteracy. It is a myth to assume that illiterate persons are reluctant to come forward, are mostly immigrants and nonwhites, and somehow "fell through the cracks." Neither is it accurate to blame the illiteracy problem on parents not reading to their children, television, or a shift away from phonics. Other myths include the beliefs that the illiteracy problem can be met on the local level, that the problem can be left to volunteers, or that more research is needed. America's illiteracy problem has had profound costs to our society and potential costs to a free press. The illiteracy problem has resulted in the emergence of two literacies--and what is more--two nations. The press can and must take steps to find and implement long-term solutions to the problem. The press can become an advocate of adult literacy and can work to eradicate the stigma surrounding adult nonreaders. Newspapers can use their pages to advance specific local goals, their outreach power to launch citywide or regional events promoting literacy, and their corporate power and prestige to help make the vast expansion of local programs possible. (Appendixes include guidelines for increasing the role of American newspapers in the war on illiteracy and information on useful contacts for newspaper literacy action.) (MN)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man... receive those papers and be capable of reading them.

—*Thomas Jefferson*
Letter to Colonel Edmund Carrington
January 1787

Now men who have lost their grip upon the relevant facts of their environment are the inevitable victims of agitation and propaganda. The quack, the jingo, and the terrorist can flourish only where the audience is deprived of independent access to information... Men cease to respond to truths, and respond simply to opinions... The whole reference of thought comes to be what somebody asserts, not what actually is.

—*Walter Lippman*
"What Modern Liberty Means,"
Atlantic Monthly, *December 1921*

WHERE STANDS THE REPUBLIC?

Illiteracy: A Warning and a Challenge to the Nation's Press

By Jonathan Kozol

A report, with recommendations to the American Newspaper Publishers Association and the American Society of Newspaper Editors, written at the invitation of Cox Newspapers

October 1986

COX NEWSPAPERS

As he took the podium in San Francisco on the morning of April 21, 1986, few could have predicted the impact of Jonathan Kozol on the newspaper industry.

Kozol's audience was America's newspaper publishers, gathered for their annual convention. His topic was illiteracy and the role newspapers could play in ending it.

Kozol, author of Illiterate America, *had barely 30 minutes to make his case, but he made it masterfully. Using real-life experiences against the backdrop of truly worrisome numbers, Kozol portrayed an America in danger of losing the battle against illiteracy.*

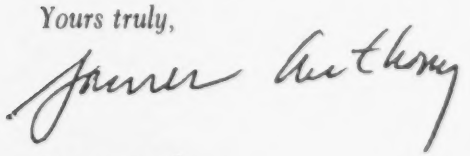
In the months since Kozol's speech, newspapers have responded in a variety of ways. Some have reported extensively on the topic. Others have directed charitable dollars toward literacy programs. Still others have assumed literacy leadership roles in their communities.

Cox Newspapers has undertaken many of these tasks. But Kozol's speech so intrigued us that we asked him to build upon it. We asked him to tell us in greater detail what we, as an industry, could do.

We are proud to present Kozol's answer to that question. We hope you will read "Where Stands the Republic? Illiteracy: A Warning and a Challenge to the Nation's Press."

A 30-minute speech six months ago in San Francisco has escalated into a document that may well provide the plan newspapers need in their battle against illiteracy.

Yours truly,



Garner Anthony
Chairman of the Board
and Chief Executive Officer
Cox Enterprises, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

In a small Appalachian village called Dungannon, a coal miner's wife is talking to a Lutheran church worker: "My husband couldn't read more than second or third grade—his name and a few words. He's been a coal miner all his life. They put him in as safety man... They never knew he couldn't read."

In Cleveland, a frightened man who will not give his name says this to a reporter: "When I was in elementary school they passed me on... They let me go... I graduated but I never learned to read. I worked in a steel mill all my life—'til they shut down. I'm laid off now..." He tells the reporter he is 43 years old.

In a hotel for homeless people in New York, an illiterate mother asks a visitor to read to her a letter she received from Bellevue Hospital. The letter tells her that her son has been lead-poisoned. She is told to bring him back immediately for treatment. She received the letter two weeks ago. It has been buried beneath a pile of other documents she cannot understand.

Another woman in the same hotel fills out a food stamp application incorrectly. She is cut off from welfare benefits as a result. On the night the visitor meets her, she is in a state of panic. It's Christmas Eve of 1985. Her children have had nothing to eat but peanut butter for five days.

A man in California relates this story to a visitor: "I stood at the bottom of the ramp. My car had broke down on the freeway. There was a phone. I asked for the police. They was nice. They said to tell them where I was. I looked up at the signs. There was one that I had seen before. I read it to them: ONE WAY STREET. They thought it was a joke. I told them I couldn't read. There was other signs above the ramp. The cop was nice. He told me: 'Try once more.' I did my best. I couldn't read. I only knew the sign above my head. The cop was trying to be nice. He knew that I was trapped. 'I can't send out a car to you if you can't tell me where you are.' I felt afraid. I nearly cried. I only said: 'I'm on a one-way street.' "

A semiliterate woman in Boston sums it up like this: "The world is words. If you don't read, you don't *know*."

As we have been reading over several of these stories, we have found our thoughts returning to the words of an American whom we remember with affection.

Archibald MacLeish worked as a journalist for many years, then served as Librarian of Congress under Franklin Roosevelt. He later came to teach at Harvard College; it was there, exactly thirty years ago this fall, that this author had the privilege to be his student.

Five years ago, when he was 89, we visited his home near Amherst, Massachusetts. We spoke with him a while of the matters that are treated here. As we said goodbye in the late afternoon, he handed us a copy of one of his final poems. It ended with these words:

Show me, old friends, where in the darkness still
stands the great Republic on its hill!

We are speaking to our colleagues in the written press of the United States. The words of Thomas Jefferson cited above are known well to newspaper people. The words of MacLeish—like those of Walter Lippmann, written in the years just after World War I—are less familiar.

Together, these three statements—and the voices of those millions of illiterate adults who cannot read them—pose the challenge and create the context for this book.

CHAPTER I

We stand at a historic moment... Here is one issue where the newspapers of America can campaign in unison. I don't think anything like this has ever happened before.

—*Jay Ambrose, Editor*
El Paso Herald-Post

Untangling the Numbers

This issue is a sand trap for the press.

It wastes time and drains off energy from the important questions.

Editors in city rooms across the nation ask if we can simplify the numbers in a few crisp words.

We will try.

(1) Approximately 25 million adults read today beneath a fifth grade level. Only a few million may be labeled "absolute nonreaders." Most read at levels between second and fourth grades. A slightly lower figure of 21 million released by the U.S. Education Secretary, does not include prison inmates or adults under 20. Adjusted for these two substantial groups, the number is consistent with our own.

(2) Another 35 to 40 million adults read between the fifth and eighth grade levels. These numbers do not refer to years of school completed but to levels of achieved skill.

The two groups total over 60 million adults in an adult population of almost 180 million. We repeat that we are not suggesting that one third of all adults in our society are unable to read. We are saying that these people read at levels that deny them access to some very basic forms of education.

What does it mean to read beneath the ninth grade level in this nation? It is hard, if not impossible, to understand the antidote instructions on a can of "Drano" if your child swallows it by error.

It is virtually impossible to understand the information that accompanies a phone bill.

A recent mailing from New England Telephone told customers how to determine whether a malfunction was located in the phone itself or in the line. The notice, which was purposely designed to be less complicated than traditional commercial mailings, turned out to be written at a ninth to tenth grade level. For 30 to 40 percent of customers, said Harvard reading specialist Jeanne Chall, "it might as well have been written in Greek or Latin."

Federal income tax returns call for a tenth grade reading comprehension.

Life insurance forms require twelfth grade comprehension.

Public housing leases call for *better* than a twelfth grade comprehension.

Food stamp applications are incomprehensible to those who read below a ninth grade level.

Blue-collar manuals—the instructions now in use in heavy industry in the United States—are written at above a tenth grade level. As high-tech transformation hits the workplace, requisite reading levels climb to twelfth grade level.

The editorial content of an ordinary daily paper is written at a minimum of ninth grade level. Many papers, as well as magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek*, call for tenth to twelfth grade comprehension.

The U.S. Constitution requires better than a ninth-grade reading level.

How many of these 60 million people can be properly defined as "functional" illiterates?

It depends on how well we would like society to function.

If we accept that an ability to read the simplest instructions, large-print poison warnings, road signs, printed slogans and the menus in a fast-food restaurant is all it takes to function in our nation, then it is correct to estimate that 25 million people cannot make the grade.

If, however, we believe that one is literate in a society like ours only when he or she can exercise informed consent as a participant in democratic process—one who can read the past, and can *retrieve* the past, in order to

assess the present and defend the future—then we must speak of all who cannot read and understand the written press and who stand in danger of exclusion from the workforce of the decade now ahead.

We note that Mrs. Barbara Bush, an outspoken literacy advocate, spoke of 60 million illiterate and functionally illiterate adults in an interview with the New York *Times* on September 16, 1982. Former Education Secretary Terrel Bell, a careful man not noted for exaggeration, told Congress that 72 million adults "function at a marginal level or below."

Our phrasing clearly indicates our bias towards the broader definition; but the issue need not be pursued. Whether the number is 25 million, 45 million or over 60 million, it is too many in a free society.

How many receive help?

The largest literacy program in the nation, Adult Basic Education (ABE), recruits approximately 2.6 million adults. Military, prison, job-related, college-sponsored, volunteer and grass-roots programs bring the total of illiterates now served to three-and-a-half million. Between 30 and 40 percent of those enrolled in all but military programs disappear before they learn to read.

In all, therefore, less than three million adults are at present being reached and also learning anything of substance in all programs in existence.

How much money is invested to address this problem?

We limit our answer to the civilian sector.

Federal allocations to ABE were frozen at about $100 million yearly for most of the past six years.

The government believes that certain other federal programs (job-training for the unemployed, programs for Native Americans and the elderly, etc.) include another $250 million that may be employed for literacy work. A survey of such programs indicates that very few provide real literacy instruction ("training" is not generally "reading"). If, however, we include this sum as well, we end up, at most, with federal allocations of $350 million.

State contributions, while notoriously uneven, add about $200 million more to ABE. We arrive at $550 million in all state and federal allocations.

By this calculation, we are spending just a little over $20.00 for each 25 million adults.

If we speak instead of 60 million people, we are spending now about $9.00 for each person.

The White House declines to add to ABE. Three years ago, it asked that funds for ABE be cut in half. In constant dollars, ABE has been reduced 32 percent since 1980.

What are the alternatives to federal action?

The Administration points to several other kinds of intervention from some of the following institutions:

Business. The major vehicle for private-sector action on the literacy front, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), aims not at literacy in the civic sense but job-specific training. JTPA, in addition, needs federal money as a lever to elicit corporate support. In 1986, $3.3 billion has been authorized by Washington. The Administration has requested a $400 million cut for 1987.

Libraries. The Administration points to public libraries as ideal instruments of literacy action. The State Library of California recently responded to this challenge by creation of a statewide literacy campaign that serves almost ten thousand adults. Although the state now finances this program, it could not have been begun without initial federal funds. Federal funding was made possible under the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA), which presently assigns five million dollars yearly to such ventures. The Administration has requested abolition of LSCA.

College Work-Study Programs. In announcing an Adult Literacy Initiative in the fall of 1983, the White House proposed that work-study funds be used by colleges and universities to enable undergraduates to join in local literacy work. The Education Department earmarked funds to set up pilot projects. In the 1984-'85 academic year, $700,000 was provided to approximately 50 colleges —an average of $14,000 each. The model program, conducted at Boston University, provided help to less than 50 people. The Administration has requested over-all reductions in work-study funds for 1987.

Local School Boards. Public schools in areas of high illiteracy are already in a losing fight to spare their students from the fate of those illiterate adults who are too frequently their parents. With one million functional illiterates turned out of public school each year, emphasis on extra reading programs in the elementary years becomes a top priority. Federal funding for such desperately important programs is assigned through Chapter I (Education Consolidation and Improvement Act.) In constant dollars Chapter I has been reduced 20 percent since 1980.

States and Cities. Federal funds to serve as an incentive to initiate new programs at the state and local level have, with few exceptions, been eliminated.

Prisons. "According to the Correctional Education Association," writes Librarian of Congress Daniel Boorstin, "at least 60 percent (of prisoners) are functional illiterates

—they cannot read, write, or compute at the third grade level." The Bureau of Justice places the figure for all state and federal inmates at 650,000 (1984). Incarceration of a prison inmate costs as much as $25,000 yearly. The Business Council for Effective Literacy observes that less than 33,000 of an estimated 600,000 inmates of state prisons are provided literacy instruction. Several states have contemplated "no read/no release" conditions for the granting of parole to prison inmates. With only five percent of all state prison inmates given literacy help, this stipulation—if not cautiously applied—may constitute the practical equivalent of a life sentence.

The Military. The Army claims it now rejects all candidates who lack at least a modest literacy level. According to PBS, however, "27 percent of U.S. Army enlistees cannot read training manuals written at a seventh grade level."

Literacy instruction offered by the military is restricted to specific tasks required in a military setting. According to the Army Research Institute this degree of training "serves the Army's purposes" but does not provide our soldiers "with the type of literacy they need" in civilian life. More important, it has little carry-over into civic literacy. We do not believe that most Americans will find this a sufficient answer.

The public sector, then, has yet to come to terms with this enormous challenge. The private sector has begun to do so but is groping for direction. The publishers, the editors, and writers of our nation's press—an institution that will live or die by power of the written word—now have the opportunity to take a vital role in giving shape to an enlightened national response.

CHAPTER II

How do you reach them? You cannot do it by sitting downtown and mailing out brochures.

—a neighborhood organizer in Ohio

Fifteen Myths About Illiterate America

A number of unexamined statements—some of them with misleading implications—have become imbedded in the media's discussion of this issue. We present here those that we regard as most injurious. We don't expect the press to fall in line with our opinions. We do believe that journalists will want to take a hard look at these questions and arrive at some conclusions of their own.

1. "Illiterate people suffer an affliction. Their status constitutes an epidemic."

This language constitutes an insult to nonreaders.

An epidemic is an Act of God. Illiteracy is an Act of Man. Illiterates are not "afflicted." They are the products of an education system that provides the children of the affluent with many times the yearly fiscal allocation granted to the children of the poor.

"Last year," wrote the New York *Times* this winter, "the richest New Jersey districts spent about $1,100 more for each pupil than did the poorest districts..." The spending gap four years ago was $500 less. The disparity, the *Times* reported, "is higher now than it was twelve years ago."

The Boston *Globe* reported that per-pupil allocations in some Massachusetts schools are four times the sum invested in each child in less-affluent systems.

Low-income Lawrence, Massachusetts can afford only $2,200 yearly for each child's education. Lawrence turns out hundreds of illiterates each year. In Weston, Connecticut nearly $7,000 is invested yearly in each pupil. There are few illiterates in Weston.

Our task is not to heal affliction. It is to redress injustice.

2. "Illiterates are reluctant to come forward. Their hesitation is the greatest obstacle we face."

Illiterates do face high risks of humiliation. The fact that millions overcome their fears and ask for help, only to be turned away for lack of funds, is testimony to their courage and our parsimony.

In Illinois alone, according to the Business Council for Effective Literacy, 117,000 adults were enrolled in Adult Basic Education classes during 1983. An additional 112,000 adults who had asked for help were turned away.

Literacy Action in Atlanta with an enviable 80 percent graduation rate, lost 85 percent of its fiscal support in 1982 as a result of federal cuts. The New York *Times* reports that it was forced to turn away "hundreds of applicants."

Blaming the victim is particularly unkind when the victims have been waiting at the door but lack the verbal skills to contradict those who accuse them of a lack of motivation.

3. "Illiterates are mostly immigrants and nonwhite people."

While percentages are highest for our poorest people, and therefore for black and Hispanic adults, the largest *numbers* of illiterate Americans are white and native-born. Book publisher Harold McGraw states that perhaps 25 percent are immigrants.

We would face a serious literacy crisis in this nation even if we had no recent immigrants—nor even those forced immigrants who came here in the slave ships of an earlier age.

4. "Illiterates are people who, by oversight, somehow fell through the cracks."

Such phrasing substitutes the whim of error for unequal allocation of resources. Illiterates did not fall through the cracks. Most of them never had a floor to stand on in the first place.

5. "With the use of phonics there would be no literacy crisis."

Those who blame our reading failures on the fact that rigid phonics were replaced since World War II by more

eclectic methods may forget the fact that the same methods they deplore were used in affluent and impoverished neighborhoods alike. Most of those who read these words were taught to read by methods which were not exclusively phonetic. The relative excellence of teachers, smaller class-size, and the presence of supportive extra services in affluent school districts, reinforced by early reading in the homes of literate adults, help us to understand why the same methods used throughout America should have produced large numbers of illiterates among the poor and millions of good critical readers among population groups whose parents were more fortunate.

Phonics has respected advocates. Fanatical excess discredits a good cause.

6. "America has the world's best education system. It is the students, not the system, that are at fault."

It would be more accurate to say that U.S. education at its very best is unexcelled but, at its worst, is certainly inferior to that afforded to most citizens in comparably wealthy and developed social orders.

While international comparisons must be advanced with caution, it is agreed by most observers that the overall success of U.S. education lags behind that of a number of our economic rivals. Depending on which indices and sources we accept, the U.S. ranks between fifteenth and fiftieth worldwide in literacy levels. ABC News pegs us at about fifteenth (eighteenth for men, thirteenth for women). The Washington *Post* in November 1982, citing Rudolf Flesch (author of "Why Johnny Can't Read"), and the New York *Times*, also in 1982, citing Mrs. Barbara Bush, pegged us at forty-ninth—a number which is much disputed. ABC, identifying its source as the U.N., tells us that the top five nations in the world are Australia, Finland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands and the Soviet Union. It is difficult to know if these comparisons are soundly based. It is also less important, in our own belief, to ask how well America stacks up against the foreign competition than to ask how well we measure up against our own potential.

Our nation is unique in wealth and governance: We are our own worst enemy or else our own best rival. If we compete, it should be against what we could be—not what other nations claim to be but frequently are not.

7. "There has been a drive for excellence for several years. Tougher tests and higher standards have begun to raise the reading levels of the students now emerging from the public schools."

A nation is imperilled by the willingness to take an avalanche of rhetoric for the real thing. Figures released by the College Board a year ago indicated that SATs had risen about eight tenths of one percent. A study by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), issued at the same time, indicated slight improvements in the reading levels of some of our seventeen-year-olds. What many press reports did not observe was that less than two million students even dared to take the SATs or other college entrance tests. Meanwhile, one million more had disappeared from schooling altogether every year since 1980.

A more disturbing fact uncovered by this study was the stunning gap between those who were children of well-educated parents and those who were children of the adults we describe within this book. Test results for seventeen-year-olds whose parents had less than a high school education were the same as those of thirteen year old kids whose parents had attended college.

These outcomes were predictable. Tougher tests at the end of the road without enhanced and solid educative progress in the previous twelve years can function only as a post-hoc punitive attack on those whom we have short-changed since their childhood. The stiffening of graduation standards, at the same time that the funds available for early education programs have diminished, threatens to intensify the drop-out crisis by demanding more of those to whom we now give less.

Affluent children may have done a trifle better—but a larger number of the poor have been excluded from the competition altogether.

Tests do not teach reading. Only well-paid teachers do.

8. "If illiteracy rates are high it is the fault of parents who do not read to their kids."

Such statements fail to recognize the anguish undergone by parents who cannot respond to exhortations they can't read. Illiterate parents deserve no blame for inability to act upon the dictates of their conscience and good sense.

Scapegoating an illiterate parent is mean-spirited and useless. Literacy action targeted at youthful parents would be more productive and in better taste.

9. "Television is to blame."

Most people who read these words grew up with television, as this author did. We nonetheless learned to read and write; and most of us still manage to enjoy good books and we depend upon newspapers. Television diverts good readers sometimes from the full enjoyment of their skills; there is no evidence that it is a major factor in obstructing acquisition of such skills.

Illiterate adults, unable to acquire information from

the printed word, unquestionably watch television more than skillful readers do. People are not illiterate *because* they watch TV. They may watch TV because they are illiterate.

The vigorous commitment recently displayed by a commercial network (ABC) and its nonprofit partner (PBS) in launching an unprecedented literacy effort on TV justifies our faith that television may be viewed not as a rival but as a potentially invaluable ally. There is no commercial pay-off for a television network in attempting to enhance the reading competence of those who otherwise might be its captive clientele. If ever there was an act of civic virtue, this is it.

Rather than condemn TV, we ought to explore the ways to use it to bring people back to print.

10. "Computerized communications and some other aspects of technology have rendered literacy obsolete."

Computers rely on written words. People instruct computers. Other people are obliged to read them. The heightened capacity for information transfer that computers now make possible, increasing the profusion of the print materials that now surround us, calls not only for more solid reading skills but for higher aptitude in skimming, sorting, filtering, and analyzing capabilities. Drowning in data poured forth by computerized production, workers must discriminate continuously between the elemental and tangential. Consumers too are flooded with computerized solicitations, bills, and legally required notices. Those who can't read well and swiftly will be powerless to isolate the urgent item ("termination of phone service" or "bank overdraft") from the surrounding trivia.

Heightened technology intensifies the need for people with the competence to be its master.

11. "The problem is not that people cannot read but that they do not want to."

Illiterates do not elect to forfeit what they know already they cannot possess.

12. "Illiteracy is not the cause of poverty, injustice, unemployment. It is naive to try to solve this problem without trying first to alter the conditions that impoverish millions of our people."

The argument, heard paradoxically from both the Right and Left, is that we face a syndrome of dilemmas so immense that any intervention on the literacy front is doomed to be a futile enterprise. Literacy will not solve all our problems. It won't end hunger. It will not assure that every person has a home and proper medical attention. The point that counts is that, among a multitude of "causes," illiteracy is one of the very few that we have weapons to address. Many problems that contribute to the misery of human beings appear for now to be intractable. Most are politically volatile to a degree that guarantees contentious opposition. Illiteracy is one of the few aspects of injustice on which natural instincts of compassion and the toughest mandates of industrial and national self-interest coincide. It is, for these reasons, one of those rare items of American fair play around which a bipartisan consensus can be plausibly erected.

A wise society will not allow itself to lose this chance.

13. "The problem can be met at local levels. States and cities have the means to face this on their own."

This writing is intended to encourage local action. But local efforts cannot be successful if initiated out of context. The context of the city is the state: and, of the state, the nation.

New York City allocates $8.75 million yearly to address the needs of over a million functionally illiterate adults. This allocation, about nine dollars per nonreader, is by far the largest sum expended by a single city.

California, where a state senate study has identified 4.8 to 6 million functional illiterates, allocates $60 million in state funds to ABE—far more than any other state. Yet California ABE is forced to turn away one thousand people every week. In Los Angeles alone, there are 10,000 adults on the waiting list.

If California cannot meet the need with local funding, no state can. If New York City cannot meet the need with local revenues, no city can.

Local groups can do a lot. But those who tell us that the local folks can do it on their own are just not being realistic.

14. "If the money simply isn't there, let the burden of the task be left to volunteers."

This is a dangerous and misleading statement.

(1) Volunteers have made a priceless contribution to this struggle. But it is a grave mistake to think that volunteers are free. It costs money to find them, train them, supervise them, provide them with a place to work and with the materials required to provide instruction. Absence of paid staff denies us opportunity to tap into the mainstream of American compassion. Loss of organizers paid by VISTA, for example, is translated into forfeiture of thousands of potential unpaid volunteers. The choice is not between the federal dollar and the local volunteer. Without the federal dollar we are losing the required leverage to make use of volunteers.

(2) The traditional source of volunteers for many

years—middle-class women without careers—has diminished greatly as job opportunities for women have expanded. Even with the help of thousands of retired persons, there is no way that volunteers can meet so great a need. The two largest volunteer groups in the nation serve less than 100,000 people. The largest organization using volunteers in the entire state of Arkansas serves 300 people.

(3) The most effective use of volunteers is in collaboration with well-paid professionals. An excellent example of a group that brings together paid and unpaid workers, Literacy Action in Atlanta, needs about $400 for each student served. According to its chairman, Literacy Action serves less than one third the number of those *new* illiterates emerging from Atlanta's public schools each year.

We are often asked this question: "Can you solve a problem of this sort by throwing money at it?" This may be the one case where you can.

15. "We need more information. Research is needed to find out what works."

We know what works.

Researchers have made their case and have provided us with countless models of success.

The research needed next is that which monitors our progress as we move into a new phase of expanded effort.

What we do not need are further studies that reiterate the work that has been done already.

What we do need are the energy and dollars to take action on the things we know.

CHAPTER III

The Apostle tells us that in the beginning was the Word. He gives us no assurance as to the end.

—George Steiner

The Price We Pay: Two Literacies, Two Nations

The literacy problems faced by the United States do not portend the imminent extinction of the written word in our society. They do suggest a darkness that surrounds the printed word as we have known it in our time.

We look first at the cost of our economy, then at the cost of our democracy. In the next chapter, we will look at the potential cost to a free press.

The costs to our society

It is impossible to pin an upper dollar value on a matter that resists all easy calibration. Measurable items are the cost of prison maintenance, welfare dependence, industrial accident and workers' compensation believed to be associated with high levels of illiteracy. These items total over $20 billion every year.

A more elusive and substantial item is the loss in GNP. The American Library Association represents the total loss above $200 billion yearly. The woman or man who, in decades past, could hold an honorable job by physical toil and ingenuity alone no longer has a vital role in our economy. Jobs held by such persons 10 to 15 years ago are now exported to such Third World countries as Taiwan and Mexico.

In several Southern states, faced with a sharp decline in textiles and the shutting down of mills, political leaders have engaged in urgent efforts to encourage relocation of new industries. But industries will not relocate if they cannot be assured of finding literate personnel. In Oklahoma, Arkansas and Kansas, the collapse in oil prices and the ravages imposed on agriculture have awakened similar alarm and posed a similar dilemma. Across the steelbelt and in the states dependent chiefly upon auto manufacture, governors and business leaders are increasingly obliged to face the crisis of a workforce lacking in the literacy levels that are needed to attract new corporations. As the code word for survival in sophisticated industry becomes "retraining," only those who read enough to understand a training manual stand a chance of finding new employment.

Texas and California provide us with particularly vivid instances of the connection between literacy and economic health.

In California, careful studies have examined demographic trends. The older sectors of the population tend to be much better educated than the young and, in the case of California, mainly nonwhite population. As the middle-aged approach retirement, the young—with staggering drop-out rates, high teen-age pregnancy, and minimal or non-existent literacy skills—will be unable to produce the revenue required to support the aged and infirm.

California's wealth is built in large part upon high technology; but California does not compete only with the other regions of the U.S.A. As one flank of the Pacific Rim, California's competition lies in nations which surround that rim. Japan, of course, is the most formidable rival. Politicians as diverse as Governor Deukmejian, Senate President David Roberti, and Assemblyman Tom Hayden have evinced acute concern at these realities.

In El Paso, a divergent form of the same crisis now appears. El Paso shares with California the direct reality of competition with a foreign workforce. The Third World, in Southwestern Texas, is not an abstract concern: It stands only fifty yards away across the Rio Grande. El Paso's competition lies not in the literate workforce of Japan but in the low-paid workforce of adjacent Juarez, Mexico. The "twin-plant" phenomenon of border towns has not yet received much press attention. With some of the complex details here omitted, it may be summarized like this: Industries which once produced a finished product (clothing, for example) in El Paso now divide the labor between plants on both sides of the border. Low-

level work is carried out in Juarez, where the salary scale created by mass unemployment represents an irresistible attraction for the U.S. corporations. Only the final work (sometimes the labelling, for instance) is completed in El Paso. Over one hundred thousand illiterate adults residing in El Paso face the prospect of extended unemployment or of intermittent labor at the best. The city cannot attract sophisticated industries because of its low education levels Even middle-tech industry has been resistant to enticement.

Whether the competition, then, is low-paid labor on the Rio Grande or highly literate and sophisticated labor in Japan, both California and Texas face the consequences of domestic literacy failure. Those consequences, though more vivid, are no different from the dangers faced by Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio, Arkansas, or Oklahoma. The crisis, we reiterate, is not restricted to those who are nonwhite or the foreign-born. It is a crisis of misplaced priorities in a society which often seems to see its sole defense against the outside world in military force or diplomatic skill, with little reflection and still fewer fiscal allocations granted to regeneration of the fabric of society itself.

Two literacies

Adult literacy for many years has been exclusively within the governance of those whose first and often sole agenda is to make available an inventory of mechanical proficiencies. By default of those within the world of letters—whether authors, journalists, or academic leaders —literacy priorities have been defined by those in three domains: (1) the military; (2) job-training specialists; (3) those motivated chiefly by concern with urban instability and by the wish to trim the welfare rolls.

The military's motives make good sense for military purposes. As we have seen, such motives must inevitably rule out most cultural concerns.

Civilian job-preparedness, because it is so rigidly divorced from other aspects of our national well-being, again restricts itself to skills that have no bearing on the competence to read a book or a newspaper, both of which tend to be viewed as frills.

The motives of those people who must deal with urban needs are no less narrowly defined. Stated objectives are to render poor, dependent people more responsible welfare clients and, as fast as possible, to move them from the welfare rolls to bottom-level labor.

The domination of the literacy field by these severely mechanistic goals leads to the present, widely accepted concept of a literacy appropriate to those who may at best expect to function at a bare survival level and who have no aspirations that transcend immediate utility. It is assumed not only that this is the most such people need but also that this may be all they have the wisdom to imagine or desire.

When this author spoke once to an audience of adult education specialists, and ventured to suggest that "literature" and "literacy" did not belong in totally divided realms of human possibilities, he received some criticism for "romantic" and "elitist" inclinations. The same lecture, presented to a gathering of business, cultural and academic leaders, was received with an enthusiastic and affirmative response.

What is at stake here is the evolution of a dual concept of American potentials: two literacies, two nations. While "functional literacy" is propagated as a suitable prescription for the poor, a second and more stirring term has been advanced as an objective for the mainstream of our nation. That second term—"cultural literacy," as E.D. Hirsch has phrased it—summons up a wealth of riches that include a grasp of history, an understanding of the references employed within the written press, a critical capacity for moral and aesthetic choice.

The line that demarcates the mechanistic, "task-specific," functional objective from the cultural ideal is hardening today into a wall between divided kingdoms of potential learning. That wall is built almost exclusively on economic origin deriving from the accident of birth.

Editors and publishers, like all who earn their living by the written word, learn to listen carefully for connotations, not just for the mechanistic freight, of certain words. "Functional literacy" has denigrating connotations. Machines function. People prevail.

The distinction carries over into the use of verbs. People are *trained* to function. They are *educated* to decide and to reflect.

The substitution of job-training for authentic education of adult nonreaders represents a dark unspoken willingness to write off an entire segment of our population, much as retarded children have been written off in decades past, as only marginally salvageable human beings.

What causes us alarm is that the same age which has fostered an enhanced set of ambitions—"excellence" and "culture" in full flower—for one class of citizens has also publicized the goal of "functional" rockbottom competence for an entire other sector.

The same dichotomy is seen in public school itself. Rigid tracking patterns have been reinstated. The children of the poor repeatedly end up in "general" (non-academic) courses. The children of the affluent are guided into college courses. The first will be trained—the latter, educated. Those who are placed in lower tracks in early

grades tend to remain in lower tracks throughout their school careers. Forty-five percent of California's students now are locked into the general curriculum. The degree to which they are short-changed is not disguised. They are given one full hour less instruction daily than those children in the academic track. In California, moreover, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, children in more affluent school districts are increasingly receiving high-cost supplementary education in prestigious "Super Schools" that take place in late afternoons and evenings. With federal cuts, local inequities grow more extreme.

To recognize that full and fundamental literacy, in all its cultural potential cannot instantly or easily be rendered the endowment of all human beings is realistic. To give up on this decent dream entirely would be tragic. To concede that we have given up by our acceptance of two labels, two intentions, and two literacies adjudged to be sufficient for two separate levels of the population, would be unforgivable.

This is an appeal to the newspapers of our nation to refuse to acquiesce in the belief that one vast sector of our population has no need and shall receive no chance to read and understand the words you write.

At the ANPA conference held in April 1986, it was argued by a Wall Street analyst that newspapers might do well to target a more narrow audience, writing off low-income neighborhoods in order to provide their advertisers with the guarantee of a more affluent clientele. We are confident that few newspaper publishers would compromise their civic decency by following this dangerous prescription. Rather than dismiss a population of low income and, no doubt, of limited reading skills, the press should lead the nation in assuring that all citizens are able to enjoy and profit from the living history which you record.

An illiterate man, when asked to say why he would like to read, gave this reply: "Sunday mornings, people in my building go downstairs and get the Sunday paper. They come upstairs and sit around a breakfast table. They flip through the pages. They relax. They pour some coffee. Then they find a story they would like to read. Someday I would like to do that too. Sunday mornings... Drink my coffee... Read my paper... Just like other people in America can do..."

This man is asking us for help. We are confident the press will not reject his plea.

Ultimate costs

The denial of the parent's opportunity to give a child early reading help and later back-up in the public schools poses some dangers that the press has yet to give its full attention.

Demographic specialists in California and in other states have warned us of the possibility that we are seeing, for the first time in our history, the spectre of successive generations of illiterate adults, with learning failure passed on from nonreading parent to nonreading child. If this process cannot be arrested, it is realistic to believe that we shall see the evolution of a permanent illiterate underclass before the year 2000.

The press has given excellent coverage in recent years to education questions that pertain to public schools themselves. It may be the proper time to turn with the same vigor to the literacy issue—and, specifically, to that elusive point at which one generation of nonreaders drops out of school to give birth to the next.

If there is one truly cataclysmic moment that ought to command the urgent insight of the press, it is the hour in which a young nonreader leaves or is ejected from a failing public school to bear a child who will enter the same system five years hence—doomed, if all experience holds true, to emerge a decade later into an impaired and semiliterate adulthood.

In California alone, one hundred thousand students leave school between ninth and twelfth grades. One in five are pregnant females. None of these students will be qualified to meet the job demands of 1986, still less of 1990. But all those who are female have been qualified already to be mothers.

They will not be reading books about prenatal care. They will not be reading warnings about damage done to infants by the alcohol or drugs consumed by childbearing women. Needless to say, few of these young women will be reading articles about nutrition, childcare, or services for teen-age parents in the local press.

What fate will await their children? No mother will read to them when they are small. No mother will have the power to confront the problems of the schools that will receive them at the age of five or six. There will be few Head Start programs for those children. There will be few extra reading teachers paid by Chapter I in elementary years. Those children will begin to show the warning signs of failure by grade four, the certitude of failure by grade six. Two years later, many of those children will be parents too.

Now, if the press will not respond to this, who will?

And, if we do not have the courage to address this challenge now with our full energy and strength, what then is the price we shall be forced to pay one generation hence?

Perhaps an unwise answer

Newspaper publishers, many of whom have voiced their own alarm at the expanding gulf between the

literate population and that portion which reads either not at all or only at the meager level which precludes the opportunity to understand the written press, have asked at times whether they might be well advised to lower the reading level of their papers to command a wider readership. We believe that this would be unwise. Degraded literature is not the answer to diminished literacy. Indeed, it is precisely this that advocates of "Excellence" most fear. To write down the daily press out of a mix of circulation goals and of egalitarian ideals would simply corroborate the incorrect idea that equity and excellence are mutually exclusive.

The purpose of social change is not to equalize the mediocrity but to share the wealth. Inclusive excellence is the objective.

There is a sole suggestion we might venture. It may be that working journalists can scrutinize their prose to see if simple stories are not sometimes rendered needlessly opaque by overly elaborate verbiage. We might also ask if certain complicated stories could not be presented in a prose so clean and crisp that they will be rendered more accessible to ordinary readers. Clean writing need not be diminished prose.

It is easier to offer than to practice this advice. We present it therefore with some hesitation.

CHAPTER IV

A people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives. A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both.

—*James Madison*

The Written Word and The American Press

The United States was founded in literacy. Written documents—the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution—are elemental to our national identity in a manner that may be unmatched by any other nation throughout history.

Long before the founding of the Republic, a literate tradition was imbedded deeply in the consciousness of those who settled the New England colonies. It was the longing to read a sacred text, unmediated by the words of priest or presbyter, which first impelled the Puritans to flee from England to The Netherlands and thence to Massachusetts Bay. Even as dissenters splintered off into diverse religious groups, the high esteem attached to education led to the establishment of Harvard College (1636), closely followed by the first press (1638), and by publication of the first book printed in the colonies, *The Bay Psalm Book* (1640). By 1650, almost all New England towns required the existence of a school to teach reading and writing. American democracy was woven of the common threads of piety and broad participation.

"Although colonial literacy," Neil Postman writes, is "difficult to assess, there is sufficient evidence that, between 1640 and 1700, the literacy rate for men in Massachusetts and Connecticut was somewhere between 89 and 95 percent. They represented quite probably the highest concentration of literate males to be found anywhere in the world at that time."

Literacy served at once religious and juridical objectives. In the absence of a formal legal system, the colonists of Massachusetts Bay relied, though not with pragmatic deviations, on the law that was provided in the Book of Judges. Reading "for God's sake" was not, then their only motivation in bringing books into their homes. Postman recalls, for instance, that, within a single three year span during the 1680s, "Boston's leading bookseller imported 3,421 books from *one* English dealer"—books intended for consumption by a population of not more than 75,000 men and women living in the northern colonies. These books he notes, were not exclusively religious. Again, religion and the secular demands of the society were closely intertwined.

In 1772, Jacob Durche summarized the fervor of the reading public in these words: "The poorest laborer upon the shore of the Delaware thinks himself entitled to deliver his sentiments in matters of religion or politics with as much freedom as the gentleman scholar... Such is the prevailing taste for books of every kind that almost every man is a reader."

Four years later, Tom Paine's *Common Sense* was published. Within a year almost 500,000 copies were in print. "In 1985, Postman observes, "a book would have to sell 24 million copies to match the proportion of the population Paine's book attracted. America's founders, in other words, were as committed to the printed word as any group of people who have ever lived."

The emergence of an independent press in the new colonies was anything but accidental. The preeminent English poet of the period was also its most fervent advocate of a free press. John Milton's faith in the press and his belief in the importance of a populace prepared to comprehend its meanings were given voice in *Areopagitica*. In speaking of the power of truth to hold its own in open contestation, Milton wrote: "Let her (Truth) and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?"

While the colonists may not have read John Milton's words themselves, their behavior demonstrated a commitment to the same ideals that he espoused. A different ethos meanwhile was established in Virginia, founded not by Puritan dissenters but by adherents of the Church of England. Sir William Berkeley, Governor of

Virginia and very nearly an exact contemporary of Milton, expressed his views in words which represent the polar opposite of the accepted viewpoint in New England. "I thank God," he said, "that there are no free schools nor printing (in this colony). For learning has brought disobedience, and heresy, and sects into the world, and printing hath divulged them... God save us from both!"

While views closer to those of Milton soon would triumph and prevail throughout America, the delay in the establishment of daily papers in Virginia may have been in part a consequence of sentiments like those that Berkeley had expressed.

The first recorded effort to begin the publication of a paper was that of Bostonian Benjamin Harris, who published on September 25, 1690 the first edition of a three-page paper he entitled *Publick Occurrences Both Foreign and Domestick*. There was no second issue. Betraying much of their own heritage, the Governor and Council shut the paper down on grounds that it had printed "reflections of a very high nature." Less serious reflections would presumably have been acceptable.

The first continuously published paper in America, the Boston *News-Letter*, was established in 1704, followed by the Boston *Gazette* (1719) and the New-England *Courant* (1721). By 1730, seven papers were published regularly in four colonies: among them, Benjamin Franklin's Pennsylvania *Gazette*. The Virginia *Gazette* began in 1736. By 1800, more than 180 papers flourished in America. Postman observes that, by 1800, the United States had more than two thirds the number of newspapers then available in England but only half the English population.

A healthy spirit of contentious argument was shared alike by pamphleteers and newspaper editors. "In America," Alexis de Tocqueville would observe in 1835, "parties do not write books to combat each other's opinions, but pamphlets, which are circulated for a day..." It will be remembered, in this context, that *The Federalist Papers*—85 in all—were printed in 1787 and 1788 as serial publications of a New York newspaper.

The growth of the press, encouraged by Congress's willingness to lower postal rates in 1851, led to a proliferation of the "penny newspaper." The wide accessibility of printed matter, Lewis Mumford has observed, "released people from the domination of the immediate and the local..." To exist henceforth, he writes, "was to exist in print."

The flourishing of the American press continued unabated through the 1800s. Its status in the present century is of primary importance to us here.

How does one measure or assess the growth, prosperity and prospects of the press? Growth has been measured in several different ways and with divergent interpretations by a wide array of authors. Standard works by Leo Bogart, Ben Bagdikian, and Edwin and Michael Emery, as well as publications of the ANPA, give some composite impressions.

One approach compares the numbers of cities and towns to numbers of newspapers. In 1900 there were 1,737 urban centers and 2,226 daily papers. By 1920, with the number of urban centers expanded to 2,772, there were 2,400 daily papers. In 1980, there were 8,765 urban centers and 1,745 daily papers.

Another approach compares the total circulation of our nation's daily papers to the total population. Industry publications provide some recent numbers: In 1930, total daily circulation was approximately 40 million for a population of 122 million; in 1950, nearly 54 million for a population of 151 million; in 1960, nearly 59 million for a population of 179 million; in 1970, 62.1 million for a population of 203 million; in 1980, 62.2 million for a population of 226.5 million; in 1985, 62.8 million for a population of 238.7 million.

A third approach measures how many papers are sold daily per one hundred households. According to Bagdikian, the numbers for the past half-century are these: 1930: 132; 1940: 118; 1950: 124; 1960: 111; 1965: 105; 1970: 90; 1980: 79. "A 40 percent drop in household sales of newspapers during a period of record newspaper profits seems paradoxical," he writes. The sharpest drop—a decline of 25 percent from 1965 to 1980—cannot be explained by broadcast television. This period, he notes, follows the time in which TV became entrenched.

Another approach looks at the numbers of newspaper closings, of one-newspaper cities, and of total daily circulation in those cities. In the 20 largest cities in the nation, circulation dropped 21 percent from 1970 to 1980 while population in those cities had declined by only six percent. From 1940 to 1981, the number of one-newspaper cities steadily increased from 1092 to 1404, while the number of cities with competing dailies dropped from 181 to 30. By 1983, only New York City had three separate daily papers with three separate owners. (A fourth was added when *Newsday* launched a New York City edition.) In all, 25 major metropolitan dailies were suspended between 1950 and 1978, and eight others sold to their competitors. Four additional major dailies were suspended between 1979 and 1982. Including all dailies (not just those considered major), 54 papers were suspended outright between 1979 and 1983.

Two cities offer striking contrasts in the course of post-war years:

In 1947 there were nine major daily papers in New York City, with a combined daily circulation of six million: nearly twice the combined circulation of the three major dailies published in 1983.

In 1950 there were seven daily papers in Boston (not including the *Christian Science Monitor*) with combined circulation of 1.5 million. In 1979, there were two remaining dailies with combined circulation of 746,000.

Finally, there is the approach which asks quite simply: How many Americans *read* newspapers some days, most days, or every day? It is here that there is the widest disagreement and the greatest difficulty in arriving at conclusions. If we rely on readability studies—grade level approximations of the difficulty of the language used in a newspaper and realistic estimates of those who read beneath such levels—we have reason to believe that about 30 percent of all adults cannot understand the journalistic *substance* of most daily papers. As many as 15 percent find it impossible to read at all. Even for those who buy newspapers and can read enough to understand some portions of their content (comics, grocery coupons, lottery numbers, TV listings, and advertisements), there is the larger question as to whether they can comprehend and profit from the part that justifies a newspaper's existence.*

The sensitivity this issue holds for publishers cannot be underestimated, and it cuts at least two ways at once. In the short term, the prosperity of a newspaper is dependent on its power to convince its advertisers that its readership is strong. Those who bring the news of high illiteracy figures may not be entirely welcome guests. In the long term, on the other hand, it is essential that newspaper publishers be able to assure their future strength and that of the communities they serve. This strength will be eroded and profoundly threatened if a problem of this sort is not examined swiftly and confronted with great energy and vision. We believe that it is for this reason that the nation's publishers, almost without exception, have been willing to explore these dangers without hesitation.

What conclusions may be drawn from all of the above? The circulation of newspapers has been static at approximately 62 million from 1970 to 1985—a period in which our population has increased by 36 million. The number of papers sold per household has diminished 25 percent from 1965 to 1980. Loss of central-city readership has coincided with the death of many major papers and a 50 percent decline in total circulation in such cities as New York and Boston in the 40 years since World War II. To the degree that certain papers have sustained their circulation, it would seem to be surburban readership that serves as counterweight to loss of urban readers.

All of this cannot be tied to issues of illiteracy alone. But one major factor that the press may wish to scrutinize and ponder at this time is the seemingly unquestioned fact of millions of Americans who quite simply cannot read and understand newspapers, as well as the more specific point that those who represent the fastest-growing population groups within our major urban areas are those that are least literate. The "two nations," already definitively divided by economic indices, are now divided also by the power or the inability to profit from the written press.

In an editorial published March 11, 1984, the Boston *Globe* reported that 40 percent of Boston's residents are "believed to be functionally illiterate." Even if we cautiously discount that estimate by ten percentage points, it appears that three in ten Bostonians cannot read and profit from one of the nation's most distinguished papers. We see no reason to believe that other notable newspapers will face less formidable dilemmas.

Walter Lippmann has observed that newspapers do not depend for economic sustenance primarily on revenues derived from sale of papers but from advertising revenue. He notes that, in effect, the press attracts a readership in order to provide a market for the advertisers who in turn end up by subsidizing the low cost of papers. In asking whether advertisers thereby have acquired the power to control or influence the news, he observes that it is the loyalty of readers which is necessary to obtain the secondary loyalty of advertisers, that without the loyalty of readers a newspaper has nothing to sell to advertisers, that the viewpoints of the readers are not uniform, and that the collective power of the readers—if the circulation of a paper remains wide and strong—is greater than that of specific advertisers. While this argument is countered in some vivid ways by Ben Bagdikian, Lippmann's most important point still holds: The healthier the paper, and the more substantial and reliable its circulation, the less susceptible the paper will remain to bias exercised by advertisers.

Lippmann's views merit quotation here: "A newspaper that can really depend upon the loyalty of its readers is as independent as a newspaper can be, given the economics of modern journalism. A body of readers who stay by it through thick and thin is a power greater than any which the individual advertiser can wield, and a power great enough to break up a combination of advertisers."

*The Washington *Post* estimates that "most newspapers" require twelfth grade comprehension. This estimate seems high. Ninth grade competence appears to be the cut-off point for comprehension of the editorial and news materials within an ordinary daily paper.

It is self-evident that loss of readers—and the loss of a broad base of readers of divergent views and of competitive self-interests—diminishes the freedom of the press to take courageous stances. Nothing, therefore, is more important to the reinforcement of an independent press in the United States than the expansion of the numbers of those adults who can read it, understand it, and apply concerted influence to bear in counterpoise to that of those who, individually, have far more influence than they.

Ohio Governor James Cox, founder of the large newspaper group that publishes The Atlanta *Constitution*, spoke of this point in words that have more relevance today than when they were first written. "Every useful interest should be treated fairly, but it must always be remembered that individual and corporate designs sometimes trespass on the rights of the public. These interests are organized and employ their own representatives, while the people without organization must look to an honest and courageous press for protection."

No matter how honest, the press cannot afford to be courageous if it does not attract and cannot be reminded of the presence of a large slice of that public. Governor Cox's words stand in the sharpest possible conflict with the recommendation of those who advise newspapers to write off low-income readers. The purposeful reduction of newspaper circulation in an effort to weed out those population groups least able or least likely to go out and purchase what the advertisers have for sale cannot fail to undermine the very force that Lippman emphasizes as the only counterweight to the constraining bias which will otherwise be exercised by those "individual and corporate designs" which Cox identified. It is worth observing also that a literate population which can read newspapers is also one that can obtain the jobs which those newspapers advertise and presumably, as a result, afford to purchase goods and services that other advertisers make available. Long-range commercial wisdom fortunately coincides in this respect with democratic aspirations; but it is democracy, not commerce, which is of importance to us here.

We pride ourselves on a free press in the United States; but the notion has no serious meaning for the person who has been denied the opportunity to know its content. A free press does not exist for those who cannot read it.

We properly condemn those social orders in which prior censorship has been imposed upon the press; our press rejects aggressively all efforts, whether from government or from self-appointed moral censors, to restrict its freedom. Yet it is self-evident to all that there is no prior censorship so absolute as that which is imposed on the nonreader.

We are brought back again to admonitions voiced by Walter Lippmann. In specific reference to John Milton's words, Lippmann said this: "Thus the advocates of a larger freedom always argue that true opinions will prevail over error..." But, he observed with an irreverence that we frequently forget today, "true opinions can prevail only if the facts to which they refer are known; if they are not known, false ideas are just as effective as the true ones, if not a little more effective."

In an age in which cosmetic qualities (the candidate's smile, suntan, or composure) on TV render "opinion"—whether true or false—increasingly less powerful than physiognomy and make-up artistry, Lippmann's words are all the more important. Broadcast journalism, he observed, "has not only a terribly simplifying effect, but a distorting effect... " The limited time available for exploration of an issue on TV, the abbreviated nature of debate, proposal and rebuttal, the diminished amount of actual information (a half-hour television news script generally contains less information than may be presented on a single page of a newspaper), all add to the simplifying process Lippmann first identified. Then, too, the television viewer is denied almost all sense of history, of causative connections, by the amputated present tense which is the standard mode of all but an infrequent documentary feature on TV. Locked into the present and encapsulated moment represented by the 60-second newsclip or the 30-second paid political advertisement on television, illiterate voters are denied the most effective means of repossession of the past, denied the power to learn from recent history because they are denied all access to the written record of a candidate or to the editorial reminders of that record which most newspapers supply. The requisite contemporaneity of television ("now this... " is the familiar link between successive stories) divorces the present from the past that shaped it and the future it imperils.

Docility is also heightened in the television viewer who lacks competence to take concurrent recourse to the written press. Authentic choice demands reflection and decision. Readers of the press have leisure to stand back and to react; they can also write rebuttals to newspaper editors and see their written words in print. The TV viewer, whether literate or not, is temporarily a passive object: a receptacle for someone else's views. The distinction between "choice" and "manufactured preference" is too easily forgotten by Americans who fail to keep in mind the words of Lippmann. It is not forgotten by illiterates. "You *don't* choose," one illiterate

woman said to us. "Whether in a restaurant or in a voting booth, you take your choices from somebody else."

What does this tell us of the diminution of democracy? "The will of the people" is an ambiguous term at best. People cannot "will" what they don't know and understand; they can, however, be led to think they "will" what they don't understand at all. So too with the democratic implications of a term such as "the people's choice." People cannot choose for things they have not heard of. Nonreaders, limited for information to TV and radio, have access perhaps to ten percent of what may be available but not accessible to them in print.

"The cardinal fact always," Lippmann wrote, "is the loss of contact with objective information. Public as well as private reason depend upon it... A society which lives at second-hand will commit incredible follies and countenance inconceivable brutalities if that contact is intermittent and untrustworthy. Demagoguery is a parasite that flourishes where discrimination fails... There can be no liberty for a community which lacks the information by which to detect lies...

"That this breakdown of the means of public knowledge should occur at a time of immense change is a compounding of the difficulty. From bewilderment to panic is a short step... "

These words were written over 60 years ago by a man who, to our knowledge, had not even entertained or been confronted with the literacy question, and at a time of course when television did not yet exist. How much more danger might Lippmann recognize today, an era of far greater and more rapid change than even he could possibly have foreseen?

Lippmann made another searching point as he reflected on John Milton's words. Milton, he wrote, noted that differences of opinion, " 'though they be many... , need not interrupt the unity of spirit, if we could but find among us the bond of peace.' " There is, said Lippmann, "but one bond of peace that is both permanent and enriching: the increasing knowledge of the world in which experiment occurs." When the population, he wrote, has "a common area of valid fact, differences may become a form of cooperation and cease to be an irreconcilable antagonism."

Thus, both to render possible that genuine contest of ideas which Milton advocated and to assure that such a contest, if it *were* to be made real, would not break "the bond of peace" by leading to intolerable fragmentation of a nation, an amplitude of information—and, to paraphrase Madison's words, the means of its acquisition—are essential. Only the written press offers that amplitude; and only a literate population can possess it. There are those today who, much like William Berkeley, still suspect that universal literacy might foster an unmanageable dissent. We share with Lippmann the belief that an informed irreverence leads to the civilized dissent that a democracy requires, while an absence of the information that endows dissent with bonds of communality can only lead to the intolerable division of a social order.

While our focus here is chiefly on the press, one related symptom of diminished information access ought to be considered briefly. Anyone who visits in the evening in one of our public libraries is familiar with the sight of dozens of people, many well on in years and most apparently of modest means, taking from the racks of an old fashioned wooden frame the lengthy sticks to which the daily papers have been clipped. We have often stood and watched for half an hour as some of the poorest people in our city carefully lay out the paper on a reading table and, with the extreme respect and care that one would ordinarily expect to be applied only to very rare and fragile books, they turn the pages and peruse what might, by their remarkable appearance of devoted concentration, be miraculous epiphanies of sacred text.

We have no idea of whether library use has any impact either way on circulation of newspapers; we doubt that this would be of much concern to publishers. We do believe that the acute distress of public libraries in the United States will be of great concern to every publisher. No darker symbol of the national retreat from written words could easily be found than that suggested by the closing of the doors of public libraries across the land during the only hours when a working person has a chance to enter: in the evening, after work. Not only hours of service, but provisions for the blind and the disabled, purchase of books, provision of school libraries, facilities for inter-library lending, the exchange of documentation, and—as we have seen—even the programs which permit our libraries to teach illiterates to read, all are threatened with reduction or extinction by requested federal cuts. The Boston Public Library, one of the nation's oldest, has been forced in recent years to limit services and hours in branch libraries. So too with the public libraries of Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago and New York. Small communities have suffered too. In Summersville, West Virginia, the library, lacking proper funding, has been relegated to the top floor of a fire station. Elderly residents and those who are infirm cannot even climb the stairs.

Funding cuts requested for next year threaten to reduce the services that libraries provide to eight million occupants of orphanages, hospitals, prisons and other public institutions. They threaten, too, to end the use of

bookmobiles and to limit additional extension services to rural areas.

Even children's and school libraries have suffered. "While the prices of children's books have risen 30 percent and adult nonfiction and reference books have risen in price even more since 1978," writes Daniel Boorstin, "the average per-pupil expenditure for books... has increased only 33 cents (or 7%)... As school funds are curtailed, school libraries are among the first targets, especially in elementary schools...

"While our national budget for defense increases," writes Boorstin, "and while the weapons of defense become ever more sophisticated, requiring literate citizens to operate them, the facilities to help Americans become literate and remain literate do not keep pace... In the very neighborhoods where people most need constructive leisure and self-improvement activities, libraries often cease to be accessible."

Thus it is that, while the analysts propose that our newspapers soon might think of pulling back from neighborhoods in which poor people dwell, the lights go out within their libraries as well. The final irony is seen in spring of 1986: The Library of Congress, having created a Center for The Book to foster greater reverence for the printed word, is forced to shut its own doors in the evenings and shave back on other services because of budget cuts. "Let the lights burn late," the President urged in launching an appeal for local literacy efforts in September 1983, "in our classrooms, our church basements, our libraries and around our kitchen tables, wherever we can gather to help others help themselves to the American dream." But the lights are going out in libraries from Washington D.C. to Oregon these days; and those who care for the survival of the written word in newsprint or in bound and published books have felt the darkness too.

We are writing these words in summer 1986. The Library of Congress has reopened in the evenings. Other public libraries, with less power to be heard in Washington, have not been so fortunate. We are reminded that, one year from now, the nation will be celebrating the two hundredth anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution. We wonder about those millions of Americans who cannot read the Constitution and those other documents to which our political leaders will no doubt refer during that time of celebration. It is not likely that they will be reading Milton's essay either, nor Lippman's words on Milton, nor any words the press may choose to write in dark reflection on the paradox this represents.

The open contest of ideas that Milton's eloquence invites lies at the heart of a democracy. It is upon this rock that a free press will stand or fall. Neither extreme conservatives nor radical dissenters have anything to fear from such an open contestation. Each of us who writes with strong conviction does so in the confidence that our beliefs are sound and can stand up before the scrutiny of readers who are adequately armed with information to defend themselves against forensic charm or spurious pretension and will therefore be empowered to choose wisely from competing points of view. Only the written press can arm a population with that necessary context. But only a literate nation can partake of what the press provides.

A woman we met in New York City showed us a copy of the New York *Post*. Because we knew she could not read, we asked her why she purchased it at all. "I read the pictures," she replied. "When I'm on the subway I pretend that I can read the words."

The British author C.P. Snow, speaking in a very different context, wrote these words: "I can't help thinking of the Venetian Republic in their last half-century. Like us, they had once been fabulously lucky. They had become rich, as we did, by accident. They had acquired immense political skill, just as we have. A good many of them were tough-minded, realistic, patriotic men. They knew, just as clearly as we know, that the current of history had begun to flow against them. Many of them gave their minds to working out ways to keep going. It would have meant breaking the pattern into which they had crystallized. They were fond of the pattern, just as we are fond of ours. They never found the will to break it."

Snow wrote these words in an essay titled *The Two Cultures*. The cultures he had in mind were those of science and humanities; he was alarmed by the increasing gulf between these separate realms of the imagination. Those in one culture, he believed, could rarely comprehend the writings of the other. The two cultures of which we speak in the United States today are separated by an even wider gulf: that of the printed word itself. Whether we find the will to break the patterns that divide us depends to a considerable degree upon the leadership and courage which the written press is willing to provide.

What then should be done?

CHAPTER V

Our Republic and its press will rise or fall together.

—Joseph Pulitzer

Recommendations

We have surveyed a number of literacy efforts undertaken in the past two years by many of our nation's papers. We have worked with several of these papers, met with dozens of journalists and editors, and shared in lengthy conversations with a number of the nation's leading publishers. Many inventive programs have already been begun. With few exceptions they fall into six areas of action: (1) financial contributions to some of the national organizations or to local literacy programs, particularly those which rely almost exclusively on volunteers; (2) local coalition-building among private sector, governmental and community leaders; (3) the use of the press itself to raise awareness of the literacy issue, often in cooperation with a local radio or TV station; (4) the sponsorship of festivals, fairs, contests, and the like to raise enthusiasm around books and reading, often in collaboration with book-distribution projects; (5) the publication of special columns, pages, feature items written at sufficiently low levels to be used in adult literacy work; (6) the donation of newspapers to the public schools or local literacy groups for use as an ingredient of instruction.

All of this is an encouraging reminder of the power of the press to mobilize around a critical issue. The Gannett papers and some other major chains have made substantial fiscal contributions. The Scripps-Howard papers have employed their syndication service to advance awareness on this issue. The Times-Mirror papers, including the Denver *Post* and *Newsday* , have initiated major public forums. So, too, with the Kansas City *Star* and several other journals with which we have had the opportunity to work in close cooperation. The editor of the *Herald-Post*, a small Scripps-Howard paper in El Paso, undertook a virtually unprecedented step in spring of 1985 by declaration of the next twelve months as "The Year of The Printed Word." Following through on this commitment, the *Herald-Post* has mobilized El Paso in collaboration with a community college, business leaders, university scholars, and a wise array of others. More recently, the San Francisco *Chronicle* has begun—in a collaboration with the Library of Congress—what may be the most ambitious effort at enhanced awareness undertaken up to now by any single paper.

In a very different undertaking, the Philadelphia *Daily News* has been running a substantial section of hard news aimed at the emerging reader, written at approximately sixth grade level. This selective method of enticement for the marginal reader does not undermine the otherwise high level of the paper's content. A totally unexpected source of backing has emerged among the humorists and artists who design the nation's comics. Organized out of Long Beach, California, leaders of this group have launched a traveling road-show to raise public consciousness around the literacy issue. Some of the comic-based materials they have created open up a whole new range of possibilities for newspaper application.

"Newspapers in Education," a long-standing organization of approximately 700 U.S. daily papers, has intensified its efforts in the past twelve months, while the ANPA through its charitable foundation has endeavored to advance the literacy issue to the front burner of American concern. Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA), the nation's second largest volunteer group, has produced a handbook that provides a step-by-step approach for use of a newspaper in an adult literacy class. Greg Leeds, an imaginative tutor working with the New York City branch of LVA, has developed an entirely different method of employing newspaper materials in adult literacy work—an approach that seems well-suited to the major cities and which now is being tested in New York. Book-industry cooperation has continued strong, with particularly

important contributions from B. Dalton. We have met with virtually every sector of this industry, from booksellers to distributors and publishers, in recent months. Their continued loyalty can be expected. Finally, the coordinated efforts of two television networks, ABC and PBS, promise to constitute a formidable partnership in galvanizing national attention through the twelve months now ahead.

These are but a few of the initiatives already underway. While summarizing all these efforts and expanding on them in some detail (see Appendix I), we propose to offer here some recommendations that may lead our nation's major papers and their publishers to reach a bit beyond the range of what has been attempted up to now—and to do so in an attitude of mind that can eschew the "one-time big-event" mentality that seems increasingly familiar in America.

A degree of caution seems appropriate in face of that contagious inclination that impels us, as Americans, to lend ourselves to short-term and exhilarating projects that appeal to us because of their star value. "Live Aid," "U.S.A. For Africa," "Hands Across America" are three examples of high-profile mobilization of this nature. The short attention span created by TV tends to guarantee that the enduring impact of such efforts is almost exactly in inverse proportion to the glitter and expense of the initial venture.

With this consideration, then, all of the recommendations offered here share the common bond of holding the potential to promote long-term results—concrete projects with ingredients for self-regeneration—which, we hope, will long outlive initial inspiration given by newspapers.

1. A difficult first step is to eradicate the stigma that attaches to adult nonreaders.

With the help of radio and TV, we propose an ardent effort to rescue the dialogue from terms such as "epidemic" or "affliction" and to state the issue flatly in the syllables that truth demands and strategy requires: "Illiterate people, cheated once, deserve a second chance." A sensitive attempt to humanize the language and, therefore, the attitude that frequently prevails in our discussion of this issue would be salutary.

2. Projects are rendered permanent by their enactment into law or by provision of a future funding base.

Mayor Goode of Philadelphia and some other urban leaders have initiated literacy efforts with a fiscal allocation (either purely public or a private/public mix) projected over periods that last up to four years. Most of the private/public projects we have studied have a projected span of only twelve months or at most two years. By the time these projects have begun to show results, they will have effectively expired. Commitment of three to five years seem essential if we wish to see some meaningful results. The institutionalization of support is equally essential. Whether this can be provided by municipal or by state legislative action or by the creation of a nonprofit foundation nourished by the private sector, or a combination of the two, depends upon conditions that will vary from one city to another; but all experience in previous struggles of this kind reminds us that activities like these are soon allowed to wither if the moment of initial fervor is not used to implement a vehicle that will outlast the energy of individuals who made it possible.

Literacy groups repeatedly insist that they would rather have the certitude of several years' support at an extremely modest level than the receipt of one large grant that must be spent within a single year. Few local literacy groups have the resources—in the form of infrastructure, for example—to quadruple present efforts in twelve months; obliged to do so, they will spend unwisely. Given longterm sustenance, on the other hand, they may expand ten-fold during a series of well-monitored progressions. This is, in essence, a distinction between naive action built upon short-term euphoria and realistic action that becomes a permanent activity of the society.

3. The emphasis should be on grass-roots programs which are done not "for" but "with" the people whom we plan to serve.

The term "community" is loosely used by many literacy advocates. Virtually every program in existence claims that it is "based in the community." What this means is often little more than that it is not run from Washington but by a group of civic-minded people who have time and energy to offer to the poor. These decent people are essential for success; but, if they function virtually alone (or, as is occasionally the case, with only token representation from the population to be served), their efforts are restricted in a number of familiar ways. They tend to be attracted to the "fun-and-festival" mentality that builds a frothy atmosphere of cheerful slogans, public celebrations, street-fairs and the like, which may encourage those who read already to read more, and those who read a little to improve their skills in incremental ways, but do not have the sense of urgency to reach those in the greatest need because the one thing they omit is any vivid sense of human misery, exclusion, and ordeal.

A grass-roots program is defined by answers to at least

three questions:

(1) Who calls the shots in setting up the structure and the goals of actual recruitment and instruction? (2) Who is involved in the recruiting work and what tone does it assume? (3) Where (in what buildings, in what settings) do recruitment and instruction finally take place?

• Even in neighborhoods where 45 percent of adult residents are barely literate, or only marginally so, it is self-evident that 55 percent are capable of reading words (these words, for instance) and therefore of being a potential resource for their neighbors. While it is true that many illiterates experience extreme anxiety when they are forced to share their "secret" with a neighbor, it is no less true that people in close-crowded neighborhoods of poverty already tend to know which of their neighbors cannot read. Anxiety, in any case, may be substantially reduced as stigma is diminished by the press approach we have proposed.

We asked one woman in a housing project in Ohio whether there was something she could do to help her neighbors. "What could I do? I could sit down every night and teach them right here in my kitchen. Just give me help. Just show me what to do. And tell me what day we begin!" There are millions of such people in America. Many who live on welfare checks today would be ideal candidates as literacy teachers, organizers and recruiters. A stipend awarded to the woman we have just described would remove one decent citizen from welfare, while the work she carries out might, in the course of time, remove a dozen of her neighbors from the same dependence. Bootstrap self-emancipation is an honored concept in America; this activity cannot take place with unpaid volunteers. Volunteers may reinforce that woman in her work; volunteers might even be the ones who train her. But only when she herself can be empowered to join us, and be given the remuneration this requires, will we be speaking of community involvement as opposed to benefaction.

• Neighborhood workers are particularly important in recruitment. Literacy groups, as we have seen, concede that much of what they do remains a "creaming operation." Such groups despair at times of the resistance they experience from those who represent the poorest and least literate sectors of the population. We forget at times that *who we are* is, in itself, a powerful disincentive. "I cannot read," said Sojourner Truth. "But I can read people." So too can illiterate adults today. The message they read within our eyes may be benign but cannot be the same as what they read within the eyes of those who share the life-conditions that they know.

"We can be your best recruiters," one poor woman told us.

We propose that this be taken as a challenge and that funding be provided to transform it into a reality.

• Recruitment by PSAs on television is familiar but inherently self-limiting. Without dismissing the power of both national and local media to reach illiterates directly (disc jockeys, for instance, are regarded frequently as heroes in poor neighborhoods and might be effective allies in this effort), we believe that the best methods of recruitment have as yet been scarcely tried and now must be begun in earnest.

(1) Door-to-door recruitment by a trusted neighbor is the single most effective means we know. Outsiders cannot do this. Many, faced with fear of urban violence, are also scared to do so.

(2) Recruitment at the point of contact with the written word—the place where the nonreader, under pressure of emergency, collides with printed information—is an ideal method of enrolling those in greatest need. The emergency wards of hospitals, pediatric and prenatal clinics, juvenile and adult criminal court, alcohol and drug detoxification centers, welfare offices, shelters for the homeless, food stamp centers, public and low-income housing bureaus, all those places people find themselves in times of desperation are the places where they also are obliged to read, fill out, or sign those crucial written documents they rarely understand. People stand in line forever at these public agencies. Those of us who have protested that we cannot reach the "hard-to-find" won't have a hard time finding them if we will go to places where those people *are*, not wait for them to come to us.

• Instruction itself, wherever possible, should take place in the neighborhoods of greatest need. Several corporations such as Citibank and J. C. Penney in Manhattan have provided space in offices or cafeterias to operate effective literacy programs. It would be dogmatic and ungracious to reject the use of cheerful settings of this sort where they have proven their success. A wider outreach in the years ahead requires, however, that we bring the programs ever closer to the site of highest urgency: the place of greatest pain. Vacant units in housing projects, unused (often boarded) houses, storefronts, churches, Head Start centers, small branch libraries, unused space in private business settings if they are not far removed from the communities we serve—all represent the optimal locations to spare those whom we recruit the cost, the loss in time, and fear of getting lost involved in travel to downtown locations. School buildings, representing scenes of former failure, seem to be intimidating to nonreaders; this obstacle is often overcome by an inviting atmosphere.

Proximity of location brings, of course, the same risk of identification by one's neighbors we addressed above. A basic question is suggested by the frequency with which this point is raised: Do we intend forever to remove illiterates from their reality, their actual existence, and provide a secret place and secret situation to provide instruction? This may be a useful way to meet the needs of very frightened individuals, especially those rare nonreaders who have somehow led a middle-class existence and might truly face a shocked reaction from their neighbors if their difficulties become known; but it is a hopeless way to meet the needs of millions who are anything but middle class and who cannot possibly receive the help they need by secretive and insular devices.

Most distasteful to us in the syndrome of this secretive approach is its almost certain consequence in total absence of community support and of collective action. It is partly for this reason also that we question the insistence of some literacy groups exclusively on one-to-one instruction. The rationale for this, again, is "privacy"—though there is also sometimes an additional argument that faster progress is achieved in individual instruction. We recognize that this is often so; one-to-one tutorial can be remarkably successful. But it is also frequently the case that the traditional tutor finds the one-to-one relationship more comfortable for reasons that bear no connection to the student's preference. A small group of learners, representing a collective consciousness of need and sometimes indignation, may well be intimidating to the outside volunteer. This is likely to be less the case within a grass-roots setting where the line between learner and teacher is not always one of economic and class difference. We have explored this issue in *Illiterate America*. Our point for now is this: Community-based literacy action is the only way in which a program ceases to remain a creaming operation. If this is our goal, we have suggested here some ways to reach it.*

A postscript to this point: Dedicated groups in many cities operate on the basis of the over-all approach that we have questioned. We do not intend to satirize good people. On the other hand, we do not want these recommendations to perpetuate naive assumptions. The numbers served by even the best of these small groups represent a fraction of the *new* illiterates emerging from the public schools each year. Few publishers, in management of a newspaper, would feel consoled by gains that are one-tenth their annual losses.

We urge the nation's press to treat this issue with the same cold eye it brings to its own business matters. Adult literacy, stepchild of American education, is just at this moment tentatively emerging from a settlement house mentality. If that mentality could meet the need, the problem would already have been solved. For several years now, we have seen the limits of benevolence alone. We've also seen what grass-roots groups achieve when they are truly rooted in an energized community. That, then, is the emphasis that we propose.

4. Newspapers should employ the leverage of their institutional prestige to bring together sectors of the population that too frequently regard each other with distrust.

Fragmented efforts plague the literacy struggles of this nation. A turf mentality divides competitive groups even within a single city. State adult educational programs tend to be distrustful of the programs staffed by volunteers. Professional programs and those run by volunteers seem to be unsettled by the more aggressive voices of the organizers of community-based programs. Business training programs tend, as we have seen to focus narrowly on job-related skills with little recognition of political or cultural concerns inherent in the literacy issue. Libraries, which have been pacesetters in this field, tend to find that they are swept aside by more dramatic undertakings. School boards and school teachers sometimes take the very posing of the issue as a direct condemnation of their efforts. University members (linguists, sociologists, and literary scholars, for example) tend to be put off by the exclusively utilitarian approach of many literacy efforts. Snobbishness sometimes plays a role here too; they frequently regard this as beneath them. But many would like to play a role if they could figure out how they might be effective. Affluent volunteers tend to ally themselves in tenuous coalitions with the office of a mayor or state official, but frequently these coalitions have no real effect except to let the government official off the hook by leaving the impression that the challenge can be met without the use of public funds.

"Volunteerism" and "The private-sector role" tend historically to be the phrases that appear when government cuts back on services. Grass-roots organizers recognize this formula and tend therefore to regard such coalitions as cosmetic.

We believe there is some truth in this perception; but we also think that there is merit in a structure that facilitates consolidation of competing groups. Coalitions need not be cosmetic. They can grow instead into an advocacy force that will impel the government itself, at

*Volunteers, employing one-to-one instruction with beginning readers, often function as a vital adjunct to a program that soon moves them into group instruction. This selective use of one-to-one tutorial is now becoming more familiar.

national and local levels, to take greater action in the years ahead.

If the press would hope to forge a strong alliance of the kind that we propose, it will do so only by avoiding scrupulously the ineffectual activities that make the mere word "coalition" instantly suspect for many activists. Typically, a state politician or the mayor becomes aware of high illiteracy figures, calls a "literacy conference" to announce "a literacy initiative" which, six months later, leads to the unveiling of "a literacy coalition." The coalition then announces its intention to "network" with other coalitions and, inevitably, to "make effective use of all existing services." Its role, it says, is "to increase awareness" and "to gather further information on the best approaches." Thus we are back where we began when an enlightened politician first became "aware" enough to call for the first conference.

The purpose of assembling forces in a state or city at this point in 1986 ought to be explicit and aggressive: It is to get a great many people in a short time into situations where they learn to read—and concurrently to constitute a vocal lobby for enhanced commitment by the government.

The measure of success should be the number of adults who become involved in learning and the number of successful readers who have won the tools by which to alter the condition of their lives.

While we recognize that it would be conciliatory to adopt instead the customary jargon about "caring" and "networking," we have learned from many conversations with the nation's publishers that they are too realistic and hard-headed to be satisfied by these cliches. They want results, not window-dressing or attractive slogans. In this regard, they share a great deal with the toughest grass-roots leaders. Something in the order of a broad-based "Action Council," drawing on all groups named above and other obvious allies, and fueled with the specific goal of finding funds and personnel to set a city into motion on this issue, ought to be established at the prompting of the leaders of the local press.

5. We propose a narrowed focus on those young adults who are, or are most likely soon to become, parents. A family literacy concept should be fostered.

A new thrust of energy injected by the press would do well to focus on that sector of the population that most clearly represents the crucial link in generationally transmitted reading failure.

First, from the point of view of job-preparedness, young adults between 16 and 25 represent the population group that most concerns employers. Even the most short-term motives of the private sector are awakened by this emphasis. Second, a focus on this age-group ties our efforts to those of the public schools. Drop-out prevention and provision of adult instruction to the teen-age mother should be high priorities. Third, concurrent emphasis on parents *and* their pre-school children ties our work to that of early childhood educators, Head Start programs, and the infant health concerns which pose increasing dangers for large cities. Fourth, there is the more important point of motivation. Much has been made of job-related literacy. We have not ignored this. But we believe that the acute concern voiced by so many parents for the future welfare of their children should not be short-changed. The two motivations (work opportunities and parental love) need not be perceived as mutually exclusive.

From a practical point of view, the community settings we have recommended are ideally suited to a parent-child plan. Illiterate parents must provide for someone to take care of children while they are in programs of instruction. Childcare is provided with the greatest ease in literacy programs close to home. More important, children of illiterate adults can be provided early learning opportunities in the same locations where their parents learn to read. Adult literacy centers ought to be attached to preschool satellites.

Where parents do not need or are not able to participate in literacy work, grandparents or another relative (an older sibling, for example) might be urged to take the parent's role. When grandparents are involved in the same programs as grandchildren, certain possibilities of story telling by the very old to those who are the very young begin to summon up some of the most exciting memories of our American colonial tradition. Story telling is, of course, a Biblical tradition too. The press, by helping to advance a "Family Literacy" concept, might enable us to draw upon the longing of the old to share their memories and heritage with those they love the most.

6. Great newspapers are ideally suited to advance a cultural and civic literacy by cooperation with colleges, the universities and State Humanities Councils.

We have explored this with the humanities commissions of the Southern states and with Arkansas's committed Governor Bill Clinton. The warm response of academic humanists, scholars and business leaders prompts us to advance this as one of the most impressive contributions that the press could bring to literacy action. There is a locally appointed council on arts and humanities in every state. Funded in part by allocations from the National Endowment for the Humanities, state commissions generally work also in collaboration with foundations, colleges and universities, public television and

enlightened representatives of the private sector. Their mandate is to make available the best of literature, art and theater to the general population. The notion of finding art and literature *within* the population that they serve (recording the words of ordinary people and incorporating them into new cultural materials) is high on their agenda. They are potentially important partners in this venture.

The willingness of corporate leaders to support an emphasis with no apparent short-term pay-off in immediate job-preparation of the unemployed reminds us that the private sector is not nearly so restricted or so narrow in its motivations as some governmental agencies believe. Private industry leaders in a number of states have voiced a strong sense that their longterm interests will be better served by genuine literacy than by mechanical and job-specific training.

"Give us someone who can read books and newspapers," we are often told, "someone who can analyze and think through a new problem, someone who can figure out the way to learn the *next* stage in a job—the stage that we can't yet predict. This is the kind of person we prefer to hire. This is also someone we'll be able to promote to better jobs over the years."

It is often forgotten that most business leaders are themselves the products of sophisticated academic education. The higher the rank of the executive within a corporation, the more likely this is to be so. Such people, while they often disagree with us on other issues, tend to recognize that the authentic cultural resilience of the nation is the only guarantee of long-range civic, economic, and political well-being.

Here is a scenario of how a city might enable such a plan to work:

(1) Find a gifted history professor, a literature scholar, or a social anthropologist, within a local university or college. Obtain the funds to give that person two years of release-time to create a book of oral history out of the stories told by adult learners—people who have tales to tell that they were told perhaps by *their* grandparents, stories that may span a century or more. Let that professor build an academic course around the theme of oral history in the specific setting of one region of the nation or one section of a single city. Identify some students who have families still living in the poor communities in which large numbers of illiterate adults may dwell. Let those students function as the human link between the academic world and the community.

(2) Assign an editor or writer (possibly an education writer on the paper) to participate in gathering these stories, then to adapt them into segments short enough for serial publication in the press itself. This not only functions as a potent reinforcement for those adults who have entered into literacy programs but it makes a substantive and lasting contribution to the cultural strength—the literacy wealth—of a community.

(3) Sponsor a grant competition for the public libraries to launch a multitude of local efforts that combine specific literacy instruction with a statewide search for oral histories of the diverse communities that constitute our population.

(4) Urge local print distributors to make available those millions of unsold books and magazines which presently are shredded or returned to publishers to occupy expensive warehouse space. Make them available in every place where new recruits are found for literacy work. The same might be done with unsold Sunday papers. Rather than returning those to the newspaper plant, sellers of newspapers might deposit them instead at local literacy centers. The availability of stories told by others will suggest to those we teach some unexpected ways to tell their own.

(5) Encourage public television stations to make use of the materials derived from oral history. Humanities councils would be logical cosponsors of this effort.

(6) Assemble the best materials from time to time and publish them as books. Use their publication as the opportunity to draw renewed attention to the literacy effort. While we caution against placing too much emphasis on the "fun-and-festival" approach, this would be an honest time for celebration and there would be something genuine to celebrate.

Oral history is recognized as one of the best motivating methods by which literacy workers can infuse the content of instruction with the passion and the anguish of illiterates themselves. In this case, the pay-off goes to the learner and to the collective wealth of our society.

(7) In broadening the ranks of literacy workers, we suggest an emphasis on five groups.

(i) Trained professionals who already teach reading (those in private programs, universities and colleges, and ABE) represent a force that might be utilized to best effect as the instructors of a larger group of other citizens who might be assigned to work within the programs we propose. Who might these other citizens be?

(ii) College students ought to be recruited. Those on work-study programs, if federal funds to keep these kids in school can be secured, are obvious participants. More affluent college students might participate as volunteers. Community colleges have contemplated organizing "literacy teams" composed of students led by a professor. Literate high school students are another group that have

been used in some communities. Teaching others rarely fails to raise the skills of those who teach. The pay-off there is two-fold.

(iii) Retired persons have been under-utilized in these endeavors. The energy of the very young is stabilized and anchored by the steadfast perseverance of the old. Both groups are appropriate because they are not generally burdened with the costs of raising families and supporting the expense of mortgages and such. They should be given opportunity to work together.

(iv) Newspapers and other business enterprises ought to recruit employees to participate. The greatest resource corporations have to give may not be their money but their personnel. The participation of their workforce in a grass-roots struggle is, in any case, one of the best ways to attract their fiscal backing. Corporate representatives, after working several nights a week with four or five nonreaders, come back to their offices as loyal advocates who then are better motivated to solicit funding.

(v) Finally, we reiterate the need for the participation of community residents themselves. Programs we have seen in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco have gone further than most others in exploring this approach. Former learners who have now developed solid literacy skills have been "recycled" into literacy teachers, organizers, or recruiters. Such people, knowing as they do first-hand the anguish that illiterates undergo, provide a link between the privileged and disenfranchised. Neighborhood residents, however, cannot be employed without substantial funds; it is here, most vividly, that we are forced to see the dangers of a purely volunteer approach. Volunteers inevitably are drawn from those who are not in financial need. An approach based solely on the use of volunteers guarantees therefore that what we call "community" programs will forever represent the kindliness of one community bestowed upon another. A combination of volunteer recruitment with well-funded neighborhood participation is the way to forge the two groups into one.

7. Advocacy for public funding of the literacy effort at the national level represents a solemn obligation for newspapers. Once engaged in local literacy action, newspapers will better recognize this need.

Much of this chapter up to now has circumvented one of the chief obstacles defined in the first pages of this book. A publication of the Business Council for Effective Literacy makes the argument succinctly: "Even if the numbers of volunteers were tripled, (the) national cadre of volunteers would not be large enough to reach the millions of illiterates in need of help... The current delivery system is stretched thin and can go no further without additional resources." The calculations of another BCEL publication indicate that merely to increase three-fold the numbers reached today would call for between seven and nine billion dollars yearly. It is self-evident that cities, states and private-sector contributions cannot assemble funding on this scale.

In Georgia alone, to take but one example, state officials estimate 900,000 adults over 16 with less than a ninth grade education. Those who have less than a twelfth grade education add about 800,000 more. Because grade levels tend to overstate (often by several years) the reading competence of adults who drop out of school, it must be accepted that the numbers of adults in Georgia who do not read well enough to understand newspapers may exceed a million-and-a-half. Of this number, 36,000 adults (2.4 percent) are served today by federally supported adult literacy programs. Excellent private groups like Literacy Action may serve in all a couple of thousand more.

Newspaper reinforcement of these efforts, with the full support of all of the public/private groups considered in this essay, might at best reach one in five of those in need. This would be a solid gain and it is well worth our attempting. But the numbers who will still remain beyond our reach must be restated in unsentimental terms.

Senator Paul Simon has advanced the argument for a future national approach no less ambitious than the WPA. Congressman Pat Williams has proposed a National Literacy Corps, funded by expanded VISTA allocations. Congressman Bill Goodling has proposed a federally funded parent/child literacy plan. While we recognize that national commitment on a major scale appears implausible in view of current fiscal policy, it is self-evident that current policy does not restrict or shape the press. The press creates the climate that shapes policy.

We do not propose a bureacratic federal adult education superstructure as a substitute for local action. We prefer to speak of energy "from the bottom-up" while recognizing that the funding to release this energy must finally derive from national resources.

We remind newspaper publishers that the nation has been willing to address its literacy needs with federal funds at several times of national emergency in decades past. In time of war (most notably in World War II) and in the Great Depression, federal funds were generously employed to meet both military and civilian needs. Must we wait again for war or for depression to address a crisis which, if we do nothing now, may make the next depression both more likely and far more severe?

We also remind the press that there is at least one vivid precedent for federal funding to address a massive pedagogic need. Many who are editors and journalists in 1986 received the education that prepared them for the jobs they hold today through scholarships provided by the G.I. Bill. It is, ironically, sometimes those very people who have benefited most from college education purchased by the G.I. Bill who are the first to question whether federal funds should be employed for education.

We urge the press to view its role in local efforts and its broader role in shaping national consensus as congruent and related. Local and private-sector dedication demonstrates to those in Washington who ask for "partnership" that at least one partner is not only willing but prepared to start the wheels in motion. Such action shifts the burden of response to those who represent the presently inactive federal partner. This seems a wholesome and constructive way to start.

At the same time, local programs on the scale that we propose help to answer a familiar plea we hear from Congress: "Before we venture to provide substantial federal funds, show us examples of success. Prove to us first that this can actually be done." The grass-roots effort, if it is successful, will present the Congress with the model it demands.

While toiling at the local level, then, we urge the press to use its advocacy force to bring this issue to the national agenda. We suggest that, in addition to the thrust of editorial support from individual papers, a combined commission of the ASNE and the ANPA ought to be created to coordinate their efforts. This recommendation stems from some suggestions voiced already by the editors and publishers with whom we have consulted.

Finally, we ask the press to give enhanced attention to a point already recognized by many leaders in the industry. Whatever our pride in local independence and in state or urban self-reliance, the interdependence of all regions of our nation must remind us of the ultimate futility of insular endeavors. Education, local school boards notwithstanding, long ago ceased to be a purely local issue. Teachers belong to national unions. They instruct our children with the use of textbooks that are national in sales and scope and application. Students, however well or ill they may be served by local funding, must at length be measured "at," "above," or else "below" a national norm. Children go to school to be Americans.

We have stood in class with children now for many years; when we start the day and place our hands across our hearts, we swear allegiance to "one nation indivisible" —not to Atlanta, not to San Francisco. Many young men who have been failed by local education, and can find no adult literacy help, turn in final desperation to the military. When those men are sent to war, they do not place their lives in service of Virginia and New Hampshire. They die beneath the Stars and Stripes. We are all held hostage to each other in this nation. We live as one. We undergo the dangers of mortality as one. As one nation we must summon up the willingness to face a tragedy from which no city, state, or region is exempt.

We believe the American press will find the courage to confront our people with a whole and unfragmented vision of the peril that we face and the regenerative power we possess. One nation, literate and undivided. This is a worthy goal to be espoused by a free press.

APPENDIX I

What can be done right here and now?

"We Want to Help. What Can We Do About It Here and Now?"

We hear this question often. Here are some concrete replies:

1. Advocacy.

This is an extension of the normal role newspapers take in pressing public issues. The goal is for newspapers to step forward as the surrogates for those who have no voice, no verbal skills, to press the cause themselves. For reasons described in Chapter V, we suggest that "advocacy" is a better designation than "awareness." Advocacy need not be partisan. Neither need it be so tempered as to be inert.

2. Use of the newspaper's pages to advance specific local goals.

• **Removal of the stigma now identified with the adult nonreader:** Language employed in speaking of this issue ought to steer clear of the "epidemic" and "affliction" syndrome. Example: A group of municipal employees in Atlanta use the term "New Age Learning" as a substitute for "Adult Literacy Classes." Good idea.

• **Recruitment:** Newspaper stories on illiteracy problems might employ a tagline to enlist potential volunteers. Readers might be urged as well to steer nonreaders to existing programs. Newspapers should be sure, however, that the organizations listed are prepared to take an applicant into immediate instruction. Steering nonreaders onto waiting lists will function only as another confirmation of their sense of desperation and frustration.

• **A regular column written at a sixth grade level:** The Philadelphia *Daily News* calls this column "The Savvy Reader" to avoid a condescending tone. It adds some questions and answers to enable readers to check out their comprehension. The column, run three days a week, is aimed at marginal readers. It is also used in literacy classes.

• **The same approach might be attempted on a larger basis once a week:** a full page that summarizes major news events and editorials.

• **An ambitious extension of the same idea:** Publish a special edition of the paper once a week. Select an up-beat title that avoids all hint of condescension. Make it available without cost to existing literacy groups. If logistics make this feasible, the paper might be sold through normal outlets in those urban neighborhoods and rural counties where the numbers of marginal readers are known to be very high.

• **Comics:** Nationally syndicated comic strips might build a story line around this issue. (A cartoonist on the Antelope Valley *Press* in Palma, California, is already marketing a very clever and sophisticated cartoon series for this purpose.) Locally created comic strips might be designed to parallel and help explicate news stories run on the same day on the same page. The goal is to create enticement for the marginal reader.

• **Oral history:** The plan described in Chapter V depends upon the editorial and journalistic back-up of a local paper. Stories gathered in an oral history project, if they have been carefully selected and well edited, ought to be of high news interest to the ordinary reader. This is a service to nonreaders which can add real substance to newspaper content and enhance its value as a vehicle of local cultural tradition.

• **Prevention of school drop-outs:** Apart from normal news reporting on this issue, newspapers might offer as a daily service items of specific use to students. Examples: Samples of homework assignments with suggestions for the way to go about them; samples of examinations students are required to take; analysis and summary of courses needed as prerequisites for graduation; sample SAT exams and guidelines to prepare for them. All of this requires a collaboration with the public schools; we believe most schools would welcome this.

• **Early childhood reading:** Newspapers might publish stories, chosen with the help of local teachers, that a parent or grandparent would find suitable to read to children. Story tellers in the local libraries might add advice on how to read a story in a way that holds attention. (This, we have learned, is an acquired expertise.) The collaboration of the public libraries is there and ready for the asking.

• **Television as a reinforcement:** Most suggestions offered here would lend themselves to TV adaptation. One example of a way to use the press and video together is outlined in Chapter V. The stumbling block is often the reluctance of a television station to run programs of this sort during the hours when they can be useful. Token programming at 2 a.m. on weekends ought be resisted.

3. Use of a newspaper's outreach power to launch city-wide or regional events that reward successful efforts and, in general, intensify the public's recognition of the role of books and authors in the life of a community.

• **Newspapers such as the El Paso Herald-Post have promoted highly energized campaigns along this line:** a 24-hour "read-a-thon" in which newspaper editors, reporters, TV personalities, the mayor and other political leaders, college presidents, school teachers, business and union leaders, local citizens from every background take turns reading from their favorite works—all of this aired on radio or public television; a ten-minute period at lunch in which the city virtually "stops everything" in order to sit down, in parks, in stores, in offices, to read: a program that highlights books of regional significance, as well as authors born or educated in the paper's circulation area.

The San Francisco *Chronicle* has now advanced additional proposals, many of which are lively and ingenious. A few of these are offered with our emendations here: a "Reading Day" at a ballpark with the lighted scoreboard used to run a series of excerpts (from newspaper columns, for example) or simply to help enlist support and to encourage literate people to recruit friends who cannot read; T-shirts printed up to highlight literacy needs and with phone numbers to be called by those who need or want to offer help; the careful selection of "monthly themes" (a special emphasis, for instance, on a single literacy topic) to receive coordinated press and media attention; a city-wide logo.

Not all of this will have a direct impact on the real nonreaders. El Paso's year-long effort might be scrutinized to isolate those items of the greatest worth.

• **Newspapers might sponsor day-long conferences on issues raised in Item 2 (above):** "Drop-out prevention," "Reading with your child," "Upcoming exams..." Success would probably depend on the aggressiveness with which the sponsors could attract the people who are in the greatest need of such assistance. Localized neighborhood conferences would probably be more useful than a large downtown event. Churches, Head Start centers, small branch libraries, health centers, welfare bureaus, grass-roots organizations might be utilized.

• **Award dinners to pay tribute to the victories of people who are seldom given press attention:** We have in mind, for instance, high school drop-outs who return to school; teachers who have taken bold initiatives in dealing with this problem; retired persons who become involved in literacy action; new adult readers who have stuck it out in literacy programs and achieved success; authors of oral histories that have been excerpted in the press.

• **Donation of books and papers to the local literacy groups (see Chapter V):** This might be supplemented by dissemination of the useful handbooks that have been prepared by LVA and its New York City affiliate.

4. Use of the newspaper's corporate power and prestige to make possible a vast expansion of all local programs.

• **Direct financial grants:** Many papers have been funding local programs. We hope more will do so. A good use of a small paper's limited resources might be the employment of a single full-time advocate for local literacy programs.

• **The provision of physical space for training literacy workers:** Meeting rooms in the newspaper and in the satellites which certain papers have developed offer good facilities for tutor preparation. Students who have done preliminary work in grass-roots centers might find the newspaper setting a prestigious locus for advanced instruction.

• **Newspaper employees as participants in literacy work:** In addition to the role of journalists as volunteers, managerial staff (circulation and business personnel, for instance) might relieve the literacy programs of much of the time-consuming work of handling funds, establishing nonprofit status, keeping accurate records of recruitment and completion rates and other matters necessary to attract potential donors.

• **Use of publishing facilities for printing of instructional materials:** Standardized materials available for adult literacy work cannot draw upon specific local data (street names, political figures, names of restaurants, ballparks, etc.) Surprisingly, few literacy groups have turned to local papers for the one task that would seem to

be most natural and easiest for publishers. Even something so simple as the cost-free use of photocopying equipment would provide some of the smallest groups with an inestimable service. Virtually every group we know lists as a top priority the use or purchase of a copying machine. Most can't afford to buy one; yet attempt at oral history depends upon a vast amount of duplication. Newspapers might also offer stenographic help in tape transcription—the first step in bringing oral history to print.

• **The most important use of a newspaper's corporate resources is to leverage its prestige in winning broader support:** Newspapers are identified with their communities, as civic leaders, in more vivid ways than other local corporations. The press therefore has power to invite and challenge other corporations to invest their funds and personnel. Moreover, the vast network of direct and personal acquaintances built up by journalists in gathering the news provides unrivaled opportunities to bring together all those sectors of a city's leadership required to create the kind of active coalition we propose.

• **A valuable way of winning and keeping corporate support is by a match-up system between local literacy groups and individual corporations:** This is the last specific recommendation we will offer. It is based upon a number of models we've observed, most notably in New York City fifteen years ago.

In that instance, a number of "Street Academies" serving adolescents who had been expelled from, or dropped out of, public school were adopted by large corporations. Each corporation was responsible for a specific center. The application of this model to the adult literacy struggle promises some benefits that do not automatically accrue to generalized philanthropic backing.

When a single private business takes responsibility for one specific program—or, in the case of a large project, one particular satellite of such a program—corporate representatives become involved not with an abstract goal ("the literacy cause") but with two dozen or two hundred human beings. Intimate pairings lead to personal identification with the needs of individuals and small communities. Corporate personnel, instead of simply writing checks or voting to approve a grant, are able to watch and assist the growth of men and women as they toil to improve and to empower their own lives. Corporate leaders often end up not just serving on a board but going out two nights a week to teach a group of adults, to assist them in the multitude of other challenges (legal dilemmas, for example) which nonreaders commonly confront, or to help set up an evening study hall for school-age children of the adult learners. Some may dedicate their weekends to assist in renovation of a vacant building to be used in local literacy work.

Direct participation of this sort may be less intimidating than it sounds. Many people find their own agendas are transformed by the ambitions voiced by those with whom they work. They cease to be benefactors. They become allies.

It doesn't always work this way. Sometimes the corporate outsider is uneasy in an unfamiliar situation; sometimes the community of learners may not feel entirely open to a stranger from a privileged and very different world. When the ingredients are right, the outcome in enduring loyalties and fiscal backing is far greater than can be expected from traditional philanthropy.

We have been witness in the past two years to many instances in which the starting point was corporate benefaction but the end-result was a community of shared endeavor that embraced the rich and poor, the college graduate and the nonreader, the employer of a thousand people and the man or woman who has never been employed and, up to this moment, never hoped to be.

Efforts like these are more than cost-effective ways of raising GNP. They are adventures in American regeneration. They are, for learner and teacher both, a voyage to the deepest reaches of their own humanity.

This is a challenge to which we hope the written press will now respond.

APPENDIX II

Useful Contacts for Newspaper Literacy Action

A Small Number of Particularly Useful Contacts for Newspapers

The ANPA Foundation publishes "Focus on Literacy," a newsletter edited by literacy coordinator Carolyn Ebel. Also available: an information packet, slide show and "How-To Handbook," prepared for publishers who want advice on literacy action. The ANPA Foundation's "Newspapers in Education" program also publishes updates on the literacy issue. Address: The Newspaper Center, Box 17407, Dulles Airport, Washington, DC 20041. Phone: 703/648-1251.

The Year of the Reader is an important and high-spirited project of the San Francisco *Chronicle*, coordinated by Patricia Holt and directed by Patricia Abe, in cooperation with The Center for The Book of the Library of Congress. Address: San Francisco *Chronicle*, 901 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94119. Phone: 415/788/2573.

Year of the Printed Word (El Paso): Detailed information is available on the past year's efforts of one of the most committed papers in the nation. Editor Jay Ambrose has hired a fulltime literacy coordinator, Kay Taggart, and runs the nation's only daily literacy column written by reporter Pat McQuaid. Ambrose also serves on the recently formed "Literacy Advisory Group" of the ANPA Foundation. Address: El Paso *Herald-Post*, P.O. Box 20, El Paso, TX 70999. Phone: 915/546-6365.

The Savvy Reader, a three-day-a-week column in the Philadelphia *Daily News*, is prepared under the direction of managing editor Tom Livingston. The paper's efforts are coordinated with the literacy effort launched by Philadelphia Mayor W. Wilson Goode. Address: Philadelphia *Daily News*, 400 North Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19101. Phone: 215/854-5925.

Project Literacy, a Kansas City public/private literacy partnership funded and staffed in part by the Kansas City *Star*, uses only neighborhood sites and makes use of donated newspapers in instruction. The project, coordinated by Joan Williams, is run by the Pan-Educational Institute. Address: 10922 Winner Road, P.O. Box 849, Independence, MO 64052. Phone: 816/461-0201.

The Morning Call (Allentown) is an excellent example of a middle-sized newspaper which has taken a dynamic role in literacy action in coordination with a TV station and a local literacy group. The paper's work is coordinated by Donna Haggerty. Address: P.O. Box 1260, Allentown, PA 18105. Phone: 215/820-6544.

Read All About It!! This handbook is prepared by LVA for the use of newspapers in literacy instruction. Address: Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc., 404 Oak Street, Syracuse, New York 13203.

Using Contemporary Social Issues...A Guide for Adult Literacy Learning is an unpublished book on use of news events in literacy work prepared by Greg Leeds of Literacy Volunteers of New York City. Information is available from Mr. Leeds directly. Address: LV/NYC, 666 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012. Phone: 212/475/5757.

Ready to Read! This packet, geared to use of newspapers in adult literacy work, also includes a teacher's manual. Cost: $7.00. Address: Janet Fenholt, Columbus Citizen *Journal*, 34 South 3rd Street, Columbus, OH 43216.

The Gannett Foundation has available information on literacy programs funded under its major 1986 Adult Literacy Project grant and its 50th Anniversary grant (1985). Address: Lincoln Tower, Rochester, New York 14604 Phone: 716/262-2315.

Business Council for Effective Literacy publishes a newsletter and several working papers on adult literacy for the business community. Address: 1221 Avenue of the Americas, 35th Floor, New York, NY 10020. Phone: 212/512-2415.

B. Dalton, Booksellers. For information on B. Dalton's work in adult literacy contact Jean Hammink or Bette Fenton, Office of Community Relations and Public Affairs. Address: One Corporate Center, 7505 Metro Boulevard, Minneapolis, MN 55435. Phone: 612/893-7600.

Cartoonists Across America. This organization, committed to support of literacy work, is organized by The International Humor Advisory Council. Address: 3908 East Fourth Street, Long Beach, CA 90814. Phone: 213/439-4166.

The Ladder, the most serious and useful newsletter published by and for literacy workers, is edited by Mike Fox, Director of P.L.A.N. (Push Literacy Action Now), a grass-roots group in Washington, D.C. P.L.A.N. is, in part, supported by grants from B. Dalton and the Washington *Post*. Subscription: $10.00. Address: 1332 G Street, S.E., Washington, DC 20003. Phone: 202/547/8903.

The California Literacy Campaign, sponsored by the California State Library, is the largest library effort in the nation and a model for institutional collaboration with community-based programs. State Librarian Gary Strong oversees the program. Address: Library-Courts Building, P.O. Box 2037, Sacramento, CA 95809. Phone: 916/445-4027

El Paso Literacy Campaign, sponsored by El Paso Community College in coordination with the El Paso *Herald-Post*, is a small but exemplary collaboration of strong academic leaders, sparked by college president Robert Shepack, and a broad-based group of community activists and business leaders. The program, run by English instructor Sandra Tate, has also organized a give-away of 200,000 books in cooperation with the *Herald-Post*. Contact Professor Tate at the community college. Address: P.O. Box 20500, El Paso, TX 79998. Phone: 915/594-2484.

New York City's four-year literacy commitment, initiated by Mayor Koch in 1984, is coordinated by Jacqueline Cook. Address: Literacy Assistance Center, 51 Chambers Street, Room 510, Ney York City, NY 10007. Phone: 212/267-5309. For additional information: Marian Schwartz, Office of the Mayor, 250 Broadway, New York City, NY 10007. Phone: 212/566/1178.

The Mayor's Commission on Literacy (Philadelphia), a dynamic program directed by Dr. Marciene Mattleman, has been adopted as a prototype model by the Task Force on Literacy of the National Conference of Mayors. Address: 702 City Hall Annex, Philadelphia, PA 19107. Phone: 215/686-8652.

Literacy Action Inc. of Atlanta has been discussed here several times. Its emphasis on analytical thinking, reference skills and other matters that transcend the mechanistic make this one of the most interesting models we have studied. Its director is Verne Pulling. Address: Healey Building, 57 Forsyth Street, N.W., Suite 1422, Atlanta, GA 30303. Phone: 404/659/2244.

The Center for The Book, directed by John Cole, has been a vocal advocate for literacy in a humanistic context. Established in 1977 at the urging of Librarian of Congress Daniel Boorstin, The Center for the Book is cosponsor of "The Year of the Reader" (see previous page). Address: Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540. Phone: 202/287/5221.

The National Federation of State Humanities Councils, which coordinates the efforts of the state humanities councils and commissions, has expressed repeated interest in the literacy issue. The Federation publishes "Federation Review," edited by James P. Smith. We call attention to its July/August 1985 issue, devoted to this subject. Address: 12 South 6th Street, Suite 527, Minneapolis, MN 55402. Phone: 612/332-2407.

Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS), co-sponsored by ABC and PBS, will launch a year-long media campaign on adult literacy in 1986 and 1987. Contact at ABC is John E. Harr. Address: Office of Communications, American Broadcasting Companies, Inc., 1330 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019. Phone: 212/887-7079. Contact at PBS is Margot Woodwell. Address: WQED, 4802 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213. Phone: 412/622-1492.

British Broadcasting Corporation. David Hargreaves has written a candid account of disappointments and achievements during five years of intense collaboration between BBC Television and the British Adult Literacy Campaign of the 1970s. See *Adult Literacy and Broadcasting: The BBC's Experience*, Nichols Publishing Company, New York, 1980.

KCET-TV (Los Angeles) has developed a television pilot and 25 follow-up half-hour programs geared towards semiliterate adults and titled "American Ticket." Supplemented by an ambitious outreach effort, the program is coordinated with the work of literacy groups in Southern California. Project Director is Bonnie Oliver. Address: 4401 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90027.

South Carolina Educational TV, a PBS affiliate, is engaged in several literacy projects with a special focus on the prison population. A pilot program will make use of existing footage such as short sports items to teach basic skills to inmates. Project Director is Carolyn Dorrell. Address: SCETV, Drawer L, 2712 Millwood Avenue, Columbia, SC 29250.

VISTA Literacy Corps, a new program to be funded under legislation introduced by Representative Pat Williams and Senator Paul Simon, would use VISTA volunteers to find and organize more than 100,000 literacy workers for community-based programs. The three-year allocation, rising to $5 million in the third year, has yet to be approved by Congress. Address for information: Mimi Mager, Friends of VISTA, 1000 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007. Phone: 202/342-0717.

Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP), in cooperation with Laubach Literacy, is now enlisting senior citizens for grass-roots literacy programs. For information: Philip G. Rose, RSVP Special Projects Coordinator, Laubach Literacy International, 1320 Jamesville Avenue, Box 131, Syracuse, NY 13210. Phone: 315/422-9121.

Even Start, a bill to foster parent/child literacy action, has been introduced by Pennsylvania Congressman Bill Goodling. The legislation, now under consideration by the House, does not add new funding but assigns existing funds to make possible some interesting models. For information: Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education, of the Committee on Education and Labor, U.S. House of Representatives, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515.

Families for Literacy, a bill introduced six months ago by California State Senate President David Roberti, would appropriate $2.2 million over the next two years to add a vital parent/child emphasis to the California State Library's on-going literacy effort. Senator Roberti's stated goal: "To break the cycle of illiteracy." For information contact State Librarian Gary Strong. Address: Library-Courts Building, P.O. Box 2037, Sacramento, CA 95809. Phone: 916/445-4027

A detailed 300-page proposal for an all-out urban literacy effort serving young adults and preschool children: "People of the Book, An Adult/Infant Literacy Action Plan for the Great Cities," written by this author for the Cleveland Public Library, is somewhat tedious reading but may be of use to the news industry or to municipal officials in attempting to work through the multitude of problems that this enterprise presents. The work, which incorporates extended comments from Jeanne Chall (Harvard University), Theodore Sizer (Brown University), Asa Hillard (Georgia State University) and several other scholars, is available by inter-library loan from the Cleveland Public Library or by contacting this author in care of Cox Newspapers, Atlanta.

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Chandler Arizonan
Dayton Daily News and Journal Herald
Grand Junction Daily Sentinel
Longview Daily News and Morning Journal
Lufkin Daily News
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